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Richard Wagner in 1842.

RICHARD WAGNER

A Critical Biography

BY

GEORGE AINSLIE HIGHT

Vol. I

ἦθος ἀνθρώπωι δαίμων

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Dedicated

TO THE MEMORY OF
HANS FEODOR AND ROSA VON MILDE,
EARLY WORKERS IN THE FIELD OF
WAGNER'S ART

Erkenne, Freund, was er geleistet hat
Und dann erkenne was er leisten wollte :
Dann wird er dir erst nützlich sein.
Du wirst nicht Alles neben ihm vergessen.
Die Tugend wohnt in keinem Mann allein ;
Die Kunst hat nie ein Mensch allein besessen.

GOETHE.

From LAVATER.

References to Wagner's Collected Writings (quoted as *Ges. Schr.*) are to volume and page of the fifth edition, published by Breitkopf und Härtel. All other works are quoted by pages unless otherwise stated.

References preceded by the letters "p.a." or "arr." are to the authorised piano arrangements of *Tristan* by von Bülow; *Die Meistersinger* by Tausig; *Der Ring des Nibelungen* by Klindworth; *Parsifal* by Joseph Rubinstein.

M.L. = Wagner's *Autobiography*.

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INTRODUCTION

> Only through error can we poor earth-worms reach the goal of truth, which we then love like a newly-won bride.—*R. Wagner.*

THE following pages contain no new contribution to the known facts of Wagner's life. In the opinion of the author we already know of these far more than is either needful or edifying. No man has ever lived whose life has been so exposed to the fierce glare of publicity, whose deeds and utterances have been so minutely studied. Records, memoirs, libraries, private letters have been ransacked to satisfy the rancour of enemies, the partiality of admirers, or the greedy curiosity of the public. Of course, all is done in the name of, and I doubt not with a sincere desire for, "the truth." And what sort of truth has emerged from all this industry?

> Knowledge comes, but Wisdom lingers.

It seems to me that with all that has been written since the *Meister's* death we have only been brought farther and farther from an understanding of his real aims and of the character of his art.

A far graver charge, however, than that of multiplying irrelevant knowledge has to be brought against some writers. A direct result of the accumulation of petty information has been that the subject has fallen into the hands of popular writers and journalists, whose business it has been to exploit the morbid tastes of the public by reproducing scurrilous gossip gathered from the slums of the German press in order to besmirch Wagner's character. In Germany the attacks have found little response in more respectable circles, but in

England and America they have been taken more seriously, and have been countenanced by influential journals whose editors ought to have known better. This too is in the assumed interest of "truth"; but can truth require that unverifiable gossip sixty years old, the unsupported statements of personal enemies, pure conjecture without an iota of anything which can be called evidence, should be dished up as serious history, interlarded with sneers and insinuations and all the other devices of malevolent rhetoric? I feel bound to pronounce a warning against much of the literature which is current in England.

For myself I make no pretension whatever to being unbiassed; but I cannot conceive why a strong admiration for the subject of his study need blind an author to the truth. My aim has been to present the known facts of Wagner's life and to examine his works in such a way as to afford a clear picture of the man and his art together, as forming an indivisible whole, and therewith to convey a notion of the greatest movement in art which has taken place since the founding of the modern drama in the sixteenth century. The outlines of Wagner's life are related, but without any attempt to follow it into minuter detail than is necessary to enable the reader to understand the circumstances under which his works were composed. Much has been omitted, but nothing, I hope, that is of real value. His life and his artistic creations are inextricably interwoven; neither can be fully comprehended without the other. I have tried to represent him, not as conforming to any type—either of "saint" or "villain"—but as I have myself learned to view him from a study of his life extending over more than fifty years, as very emphatically a *human being*. For good or for bad, all human characteristics were intensified in him, sometimes to an inconceivable degree. This is the priceless lesson which we may learn from the life of every great man, but supremely from that of Richard Wagner, that his superiority over ourselves lies not in greater righteousness, not even immediately in his greater intellectual gifts, but above all in the intensity of his humanity. He is

what we are ourselves, only, if I may say it, more so. That is to say, he can tell us in clear and convincing language what our own hearts are yearning to know; that which we feel vaguely and confusedly to be true, but only half believe, because we cannot unaided find its logical expression.

I conceive that the right way to treat a man thus constituted is neither to place him on a pedestal and gape in senseless adoration, nor to pour abuse on him for every supposed offence against the canons of social life, but to try and understand him, as an intelligent man or woman tries to understand one of his or her near associates.

> Every kind of tribute is offered to the unhappy man of genius, save the sole tribute that is of value to him, the tribute of fellowship, equality, love and understanding. He is full of the breath and zest of humanity.[1]

Neither a work of art nor the character of a good man can be injured by frank treatment; the only scruple is as to the worthiness of the critic to undertake so high a responsibility. For he who judges another, however modestly he may wish to pose, in effect places himself for the occasion above the object of his criticism. Genius must be judged from its own standpoint. Ethical laws, it is true, are the same for all, but their application varies very much with circumstances and with the purpose for which they are applied. Those who draw a distinction between the "man" and the "artist" generally seem to mean the man as judged from the standpoint of the drawing-room tea-party or the club smoking-room.

If the prize of life is to be loved by the good and hated by the bad, it was amply achieved by Wagner. Of his relations to women I shall have a good deal to say in the sequel. They were a very great influence in his life, and no poet has ever understood them as he did. Since his moral character has often been assailed on this point, to prevent misunderstanding I may here say once for all that so long as his first wife was

[1] Sir Walter Raleigh, of Blake.

living with him his life was perfectly regular. After she had left him, regarding his relations with Madame Cosima there may be two opinions; I shall state my own in its proper place. At no time of his life was he a libertine.

Against one insinuation I must vehemently protest. I have been accused of endeavouring in a former publication to "whitewash" Wagner's character. Whitewash is a material employed in stables and outhouses for covering rotten material, and imparting to it a fictitious appearance of cleanliness. It is a conscious falsehood. I shall be grateful to anyone who will correct me in any misstatements which I may inadvertently have made; but to attempt to refute an author by the use of an opprobrious epithet is a sophistical trick which ought to defeat its own purpose. Wagner's mind is a palace; faults there may be in the architecture, but they are such as no whitewash could hide.

The material for Wagner's life is so ample that there is danger of not seeing the forest for the trees, and the difficulty of selecting and arranging so as to produce an undistorted picture is very great. With all the voluminous literature we still have no Wagner tradition. Everything has been, if not falsified, at least prepared, edited, sophisticated, to represent him, not as he was, but as conforming to some scheme in the writer's mind. It cannot be too strongly stated that every published account must be received with caution, and critically verified before it is accepted. I have in this work only used the regular authorities, which are accessible to everyone. Glasenapp must always be the foundation of every biography of Wagner. His book is invaluable because of the immense industry that has been bestowed upon it. In all essential matters I have generally found it to be fairly reliable; there are some inaccuracies in details, but it would be wrong to expect no oversights in such a quantity of matter. The author does not affect to pass a critical judgment on works of art. The fault of his book is the terrible dullness of its style, its turgid, puling sentimentality, and above all its outrageous partisanship. Wagner is always an innocent

and inoffensive victim in the hands of cruel persecutors. To differ from him, to suppose that anything that he did or said was not divinely inspired, is with Glasenapp the worst of crimes. Almost everyone with whom Wagner came into close relations—Laube, Dorn, Weissheimer, Fröbel, Ettmüller, and especially Schott, who befriended him, as well as many others, all in varying degrees fall under his displeasure.

Letters should always be used with great circumspection. Of late years the practice has arisen of publishing every scrap of writing that has issued from the pen of a public character, irrespective of whether it represents his mature thought or not. A letter is often written off hastily, to meet a momentary necessity, and without any thought of its being read by anyone but the person to whom it is addressed. Thoughts undigested and ill-expressed are dragged from their obscurity, published, and so handed down to posterity and accepted as the deliberate opinions of the writer. Even letters which have been expressly cancelled and never sent are printed with the rest and commented upon, although one might have thought that reverence for the memory of a departed relative would have hindered those who loved him in life from publishing documents which might be misunderstood. I do not mean that all letters ought to be withheld ; judiciously edited and rightly used, even private letters may be very valuable, and there are many of Wagner's which I should be very sorry indeed to see suppressed ; but editing is always a difficult and hazardous undertaking, and should be assigned to competent persons, who are conscious of the responsibility. What then shall we say to the action of Madame Cosima Wagner in permitting the publication of a whole series of letters of a most private and sacred kind—the Wesendonk collection—*after her husband had expressly ordered them to be destroyed?* This too, no doubt, was done "in the interest of truth." And what is the "truth" that has resulted from their publication? Of the literature which they have evoked the less said the better ; the Wesendonk letters in the hands of unscrupulous press-writers have done more than

anything else to encourage the coarse slanders that have been spread against Wagner's character.

Madame Cosima has long ago retired from active work. I have on a former occasion spoken in high praise of her efforts to maintain the standard of representations in Bayreuth, and see no reason now to alter the views which I then expressed. But since my monograph on *Tristan und Isolde* was written many things have happened about which I do not propose here to speak, and the admirable way in which amid immense difficulties she devoted her life to the service of her husband, both during his life and to the honour of his memory after he was dead, must not blind us to her defects as an editor and propagandist. She was a woman of great ability and of a very masterful character. By the personal fascination which she exercised in quite an extraordinary degree she was able to dominate minds far superior to her own, and to employ them for the furtherance of her schemes. After she had withdrawn from active participation in the business of Bayreuth her spirit continued to control the whole undertaking. In the scandals which ensued others may have been equally guilty with herself, but they were trained in her school, and she was the prime mover.

I have felt it incumbent upon me to speak in such plain language, because the Bayreuth tradition now threatens to become dominant, and the caricature which it presents bids fair to pass to posterity as the authentic likeness of the *Meister*. This brings us to the third main authority for the particulars of Wagner's life, the famous autobiography published in 1911 with the title *Mein Leben*. Like the others, it claims to have value for the sake of its "unadorned truthfulness," and is professedly written to Wagner's dictation by Madame Cosima "in the course of different years"; that is to say, the MS. is in *her* handwriting, not in his, and has been pieced together at various times. What assurance have we that the words were written as he spoke them? There are many indications that the MS. was compiled in a rather haphazard way; may we not suppose that a good deal of it was written from

recollection, when he was absent, in the writer's own words, some time afterwards? and is it not possible that she, consciously or unconsciously, may have given his account a new turn, so as to convey a meaning quite different from what he intended? Prefixed to the work is a note signed "Richard Wagner." How do we know whether he ever read it through and corrected the text after it was written? Those who know his habits in such matters, who remember how completely he resigned all tedious routine to Madame Cosima after she had taken up his affairs, will think it very unlikely that he troubled himself about it.[1] Portions which he read to his friends are said to have contained other matter than that found in the published edition.[2] Shortly after it was written a few copies were printed in Basel by a printer named Bonfantini under the superintendence of Nietzsche. Some of these must have survived; where are they? In fact, there is sufficient mystery about the book seriously to diminish its value as an authentic source until its genuineness is better established than it is at present.

The late Hon. Mrs. Burrell has examined the question with her usual thoroughness by the light of one of the earlier copies which she possessed. As her great book is not easily accessible to the public I may be allowed to quote some of her comments. After speaking of it as "a tissue of misstatements" as "an unmentionable book" she continues:—

> Purporting in its preface, of which I give a facsimile, to be dictated at the request of another, the book is avowedly not spontaneous. According to a footnote on p. 181 of the third volume, that page was "dictated" in 1868, and according to

[1] How little Wagner in his later life troubled himself with business routine can be seen from a comparison of the texts in his collected works published in 1871 to 1881 with the authentic text in the orchestral scores. Some of the alterations cannot possibly have been sanctioned by Wagner. It is as if someone had arranged the text from an old and imperfect draft which had subsequently been altered when the music was composed. Some of the mistakes in *Ges. Schr.* seem due to simple carelessness. It will scarcely seem credible that at the end of *Götterdämmerung* the vision of Walhall in flames, the culmination of the whole work, has been omitted from the stage-directions, evidently by an oversight! It is not in the early sketch of 1848. Important stage directions are often omitted, as in *Tristan* (v. i. chap. xx.).

[2] Koch, iii. 380.

another footnote on an earlier page, 81 of the same volume, that page was " written down " in 1869, this gives the book an appearance of being pieced together. Such evidence, though valuable, is not necessary ; to the well-informed and candid mind the book cannot fail to give the impression of being written up after conversations, the exact words are not remembered, and the writer unconsciously imparts another stamp to the language, it is not the German of a German.[1] Many of the conclusions are evidently suggested, they are preceded by the phrase " es ist mir seitdem klar geworden dass," which causes the honest reader a bitter pang, for it will be followed by the blasting of a character. The unmistakable purpose of the book is to ruin the reputation of everyone connected with Wagner, it will not succeed in its object, or influence anyone who will believe that the easily proved inaccuracies are legion, and whose instinct is fine enough to detect the less tangible but far more poisonous misrepresentation. I maintain that Wagner consented under pressure to the book being put together, that he yielded to the temptation of allowing everyone else's character to be blackened in order to make his own great fault[2] pale before the iniquities, real or invented, of others. He suffered under it himself at the moment ; his letters to the printer prove what a worry it was to him during the years that the work of his life was approaching its culmination at Bayreuth. The poet who wrote the pure and impassioned poems of which Senta and Elsa are the heroines could never have conceived so flat and prosaic a plan of revenge upon everyone that had ever annoyed or thwarted him, yes, and worse still, upon many who had benefited and befriended him. I appeal only to those who can appreciate the exquisite delicacy of his romantic poems and who have studied his prose works and ask them if this miserable book is in his true spirit and if it is in his spontaneous style. I believe they will answer : " Richard Wagner is not responsible for the book."

The distinguished lady's severe condemnation seems to me a little excessive. I cannot find in the published copy the malevolent purpose which she chastises in such harsh terms ; possibly much has been expunged in preparing it for publication.

[1] I have submitted this remark to the judgment of my friend Professor Fiedler, of Oxford. He confirms it generally, and has pointed out several slight solecisms, which, though trifling enough in themselves, are not such as a German would have written. Madame Cosima, be it remembered, was not a German ; she was brought up in Paris, and, though she spoke it perfectly, German was not her native language.

[2] She alludes to his connection with Cosima.

The book is very unequal. My own belief, from internal evidence, is that the great bulk, at least of the earlier part, is certainly by Wagner. We know that he had kept notes of dates, etc., in his career ever since his first appointment to Magdeburg in 1834. The features of his vivid, nervous style are unmistakable. Some of the stories—the account of Spontini's visit to Dresden, for example—no other person could have told as he did. The bitter vein of irony which runs like a thread through the whole is very characteristic of Wagner, but in none of his writings is it so terse and acrid as here.[1] At the same time I believe the text to have been effectively "edited" before it was published, often in such a way as to destroy the sense, and I think it likely that much has been added to and much excised from the original draft. The English translation is said to be very inaccurate.

A few more biographical works must be mentioned, as I have occasionally found them useful. Mr. Chamberlain's *Richard Wagner*, published in German in 1896, in English in 1897, is out of print, and now somewhat out of date, but it still has value for its concise account of Wagner's way of thought as expressed in his writings, from which the author gives apt extracts, and for the illustrations.

The three-volume biography of Max Koch, which was completed during the war, contributes something to our knowledge in matters of subordinate detail. For reading purposes the arrangement of the narrative is rather confusing.

Other works which I have sometimes found useful are enumerated in the bibliography at the end. Of the minor literature scattered in newspapers and popular reviews I must confess that my knowledge is very imperfect. If I have overlooked anything that I ought to have known I must crave the indulgence of my readers. My purpose is critical rather than biographical. For the views expressed in my critical chapters I alone am responsible. In discussing the several works I have mainly confined myself to their dramatic rather than their musical aspects, for the simple reason that the drama can be

[1] For example the account of the *cercle artistique* in vol. ii., pp. 754 *sq.*

spoken about, music cannot. Anything like an intelligible analysis of the intricate scores would swell the book inordinately, and would not be read. I am convinced that the less said about music, as music, the better. Technical analysis conveys very little either to the musician or to the non-musician. Many analyses of the harmonic structure have been attempted by musicians, but I cannot say that the elaborate systems constructed upon the basis of altered chords, simultaneous harmonies, intervals reckoned downwards and other enigmatical devices rest upon a very firm foundation. It is much better to regard the music from the point of view of polyphony, the chords as simple inflections of ordinary harmonies, emerging naturally from the melodic course of the different voices. To understand the music the only thing of importance is to recognise the tonality and its changes, and this will scarcely be attained by grovelling over harmonic progressions. The vocal melody is, to use Wagner's own metaphor, like a skiff adapted to float on that particular flood. This is, I think, all well understood, whereas the *dramatic* significance of Wagner's works is not understood, at least in England, and the extreme difficulty of some of the texts, due to his point of view, which is so foreign to that of our own everyday lives, will make it necessary to enter into rather full explanations, in the course of which some remarks will have to be made on the music as well.

I should add that the translations of fragments from Wagner's works make no pretence to literal accuracy. Where the original text proved unmanageable I have only aimed at rendering the thought as correctly as possible. If ever we should have an adequate translation of Wagner's prose writings it will have to be a very free paraphrase.

It only remains for me to acknowledge the help which I have received from my friend Dr. E. W. Naylor, of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who has been kind enough to read my manuscript, and to offer some valuable suggestions, especially with regard to the music. My thanks are also due to Frau Professor Thode, of Bayreuth, for assistance in obtaining portraits of the *Meister*.

CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND EARLY INFLUENCES

The spring months of the year 1813 witnessed a crisis in the history of modern Europe second to none in gravity. Prussia by a mighty effort had roused herself from her temporary impotence ; her people had risen *en masse* and compelled their decadent king to take action, to repudiate the French alliance and free his country from the oppressor under whom she had groaned for six years. Russia, under the guidance of the Prussian vom Stein, was advancing to avenge past insults and injuries. Francis of Austria, father-in-law of the common enemy, was preparing to join the coalition against him. Saxony and the smaller states of the Rhine Confederation were completely dominated by Napoleon, held partly by terror, partly by genuine admiration for his marvellous abilities. France had rallied round her emperor ; Napoleon, with the energy of despair, burning to avenge the disaster of the previous year, had gathered a new army. With 200,000 recruits, raw and undisciplined, but staunch and ready to die for their sovereign, he marched from Saint Cloud on April 15th, reaching Erfurt a few days later. Thence he proceeded from victory to victory. On May 2nd he was victorious over Russians and Prussians at Lützen ; on May 11th he entered Dresden and received the submission of the wavering Saxon king ; on May 20th and 21st he gained the victory of Bautzen ; on May 22nd Richard Wagner was born at Leipzig. Five months later was fought the battle which changed the destinies of the world.

If it is true that all healthful and abiding movements originate with the people, and not with the intellectuals, the rule was never better illustrated than in the case of Richard Wagner. He was entirely a child of the people. His ancestry

has been explored by his biographers, but there is little to relate; the following table tells all that we need to know :—

SAMUEL WAGNER, 1643–1705.
Schoolmaster in Thammenhain, Saxony.

EMANUEL WAGNER, 1664–1726.
Schoolmaster in Colmen and Kühren.

SAMUEL WAGNER, 1703–1750.
Organist, Kantor, and schoolmaster in Müglenz.

GOTTLOB FRIEDRICH WAGNER, 1736–1795.
Collector of octroi dues in Leipzig; *m.* Johanna Sophia Eichel; d. of a master of a charity school in Leipzig.

KARL FRIEDRICH WAGNER, 1770–1813. Educated at the Thomas-Sch., Leipzig; studied law at the Leipzig University. Vize-Aktuarius, later Polizei-Aktuarius, in Leipzig; *m.* in 1798 Johanna Pätz, of Weissenfels.	ADOLF WAGNER, 1774–1835. Writer and scholar; *m.* Sophie Wendt.	FRIEDERIKE, *b.* 1778.

RICHARD WAGNER.

It will be seen that his family belonged to the lower middle-class; his immediate ancestors were village schoolmasters, kantors, petty officials and the like. Richard's grandfather was the first to settle in Leipzig, where he held a position which although subordinate was one of trust and responsibility, that of collector of octroi duties from traders in provisions entering the city at the Ramstädter gate. It was with his son that the family began to rise from obscurity. Friedrich, Richard Wagner's father, had a University education and became

"Vize-Aktuarius," or as we should say Clerk of the Court to the Town Court of Leipzig. In this post he must have attained some distinction, for in 1806, when after the Battle of Jena Saxony fell under the heel of Napoleon and Leipzig was occupied by the troops of Davoût, he was entrusted with the reorganisation of the Leipzig police. Such was his official activity; more interesting to us, however, is his predilection for the stage, and the intellectual intercourse which he cultivated with artists, musicians, actors, etc., of which we shall hear more directly.

Richard was one of a large family. The children of his mother Johanna by both her husbands are enumerated in the following list:—

THE FAMILY OF JOHANNA.

1. *By Friedrich Wagner.*

(1) Albert, *b.* 1799. Tenor singer, Leipzig (1819), Augsburg (1827), Würzburg (1829); *m.* Elise Gollmann, actress of Mannheim. Later in Berlin. Father of the famous singer Johanna Jachmann-Wagner. Died in Berlin, 1874.

(2) Johanna Rosalie, *b.* 1803. Actress, Dresden (1820), Prague (1824), singer and actress, Leipzig (1828); *m.* Dr. Marbach, priv. doz. at Leipzig University (1836). Died 1837.

(3) Karl Julius, *b.* 1804. Became a goldsmith; visited Paris about 1833 and was afterwards in Leipzig. Died 1862.

(4) Luise Konstanze, *b.* 1805. Actress in Breslau (1821), Leipzig (1827); *m.* Friedrich Brockhaus and retired from the stage (1828). Died 1871.

(5) Klara Wilhelmina, *b.* 1807. Singer Dresden (1824), Musically the most gifted of the sisters; *m.* Wolfram, a singer (1829), having lost her voice in Dresden, after which she and her husband were employed in minor theatres till they finally settled in business in Chemnitz.

(6) Maria Therese, *b.* 1809. Died 1815.

(7) Wilhelmina Ottilie, *b.* 1811; *m.* Hermann Brockhaus, Sanscrit scholar (1836).

(8) Wilhelm Richard, *b.* 1813.

2. *By Ludwig Geyer.*

(9) Augusta Cäcilie, *b.* February 26th, 1815; *m.* Eduard Avenarius, head of the Paris branch of the Brockhaus firm (1840); afterwards in Leipzig.

Gottlob Friedrich's second son Adolf acquired a certain distinction as a scholar. His published works show him to have been a most notable linguist; they consist for the most part of editions and translations of classical and modern, especially Italian works. The most important are: a complete edition of the writings of Giordano Bruno in Latin and Italian; the collected works of Silvio Pellico in Italian; *Il Parnasso Italiano*, an edition of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto and Tasso in Italian, dedicated to Goethe, a work which earned for him the degree of Doctor at the University of Marburg; a translation of Lanzi's *Storia Pittorica; Zwei Epochen der modernen Poesie*, besides innumerable minor works, contributions to periodicals, etc.[1]

More important for Richard Wagner's years of childhood is Ludwig Geyer. The tastes of Friedrich Wagner, apart from his official duties, were artistic; especially he was strongly attracted to the stage. He cultivated the society of artists and actors, and is said himself to have taken part in the improvised performances which took place in Leipzig in the winter, when the regular theatrical company was absent in Dresden. Geyer, born in Eisleben in 1780, was an artist of some distinction; when left without means on the death of his father he supported himself with his brush. He became acquainted with the Wagner family in 1801, and at the instance of Friedrich Wagner, who was about ten years his senior, determined to try his fortune upon the stage. He obtained engagements with small companies in Magdeburg and Breslau, still continuing to follow his profession as an artist, excelling especially as a portrait painter. In 1809 he joined the *Seconda* Company, the only theatrical company at the time in Saxony, which divided its labours between the two principal towns, performing in Leipzig from Easter to Michaelmas, and then after the fair moving to Dresden for the winter. On the stage

[1] Mr. Chamberlain adds that he was the first to publish a complete edition of the poems of Robert Burns in English. He published an edition of Burns in 1835 with Allan Cunningham's notes, but it was far from being either the first or complete. There was no *complete* edition of the poet until that of Scott Douglas in 1877.

he generally took the parts of gloomy, calculating villains, such as "Jago" in *Othello*, or "Alva" in Goethe's *Egmont*. He composed several plays; one in Alexandrines betitled *Der Bethlehemitische Kindermord*[1] was produced in Dresden in 1821 and repeated in Brunswick, Prague and Leipzig. The text of an ingenious play for children, composed by him for Johanna's birthday in 1816, is given by Mrs. Burrell. In it each child has a part and speaks in character; the latent jealousy among them of Rosalie's rather self-conscious superiority is very entertaining.

Another noteworthy member of the circle, whose friendship with the Wagner family dates from a time long anterior to the birth of Richard, is Hofrath Winkler. He was a special friend of Geyer, and as a leader of society, stage-manager, and especially as journalistic critic, writing under the name of "Theodor Hell," was a very influential person in Dresden.

Friedrich Wagner had married in 1798 the daughter of a citizen of Weissenfels named Pätz, or Peetz—the exact spelling is uncertain, for not having had the advantage of a literary education she seems to have adopted the convenient French principle, that you can spell proper names as you like. Their home was in the street known as the Brühl, and the house was called "Der weisse und rothe Löwe." Here Wagner was born, as we have seen, amid the turmoil of war, on May 22nd, 1813. From June 4th to August 12th there was an armistice occupied with negotiations, the main object of which for Napoleon was to win over Austria to his side. In this he failed; preparations for war were renewed, and on October 16th to 18th the decisive battle was fought round the walls of Leipzig, ending within the town itself. After the battle Friedrich Wagner, exhausted with the terrible labours and responsibilities of his post, caught the prevailing typhus and died on November 22nd. Johanna his widow was now left without the means of livelihood, with a large family of children, of whom the eldest was fourteen, dependent upon her. Under these circumstances Friedrich's

[1] It is published in Reclam's *Universalbibliothek*.

noble-minded friend, Ludwig Geyer in Dresden, came to the rescue. He provided for the children, obtaining homes for the two elder girls with ladies of his circle in Dresden. He now held a settled position at the Dresden theatre, and received a substantial income in addition to his earnings as a portrait painter. In the following year he married Johanna, who came with the rest of the family to Dresden.

It is, unhappily, not possible entirely to pass over the infamous assertion which has been made that Richard was the son, not of Friedrich Wagner, but of Geyer. It seems to have originated with Friedrich Nietzsche,[1] and has been repeated again and again by scandal-loving writers until at last we find it represented as a generally admitted truth! There is not a shred of evidence for the statement beyond the fact that, as is frequently the case under such circumstances, Richard while a child was known by the name of his stepfather, and spoke of him as his father. Under no circumstances could an assertion of this nature be susceptible of either proof or disproof, but in the present case the source from which it issued is thoroughly tainted. After his breach with Wagner, when his fine intellect had been shattered by the abuse of drugs, Nietzsche's malice against his former friend knew no bounds, and it is easy for those who are familiar with his writings at this period and who know the moral effect of morphia to believe that he invented the theory out of sheer spite. Or he may have repeated the gossip of other people, and have used his own great celebrity to give it currency; in either case his guilt is the same. Wherever the report arose its object was to show that Wagner was of Jewish parentage. In this it failed in any case, for Geyer, as we now know, was not a Jew; his name has a Jewish flavour, but his pedigree has been fully traced by a recent writer, and it is proved beyond all possibility of doubt that no Jewish blood flowed in his veins.[2] The question is not without importance, not indeed for Wagner's genealogy,

[1] *Der Fall Wagner*, fourth edition (1896), p. 39 (note).

[2] Bournot, *Ludwig Geyer*.

at as illustrating the mentality of some of those who write bout him, and the means which they employ to attract a ublic for their books.

The Geyer family, as we must now call them, had their esidence in the Moritzstrasse. Of the children of Friedrich Wagner several were away from home. Albert was at school n Meissen, Rosalie was *en pension* with a lady in Dresden, ruise was with Frau Hartwig, an actress in the same company s Geyer, Julius was apprenticed to Geyer's brother, a gold-mith in Eisleben. Therese died in 1815. At first there only emained at home the two younger daughters, Klara and ttilie, besides Richard. In February, 1815, the first and nly child of the new marriage, Augusta Cäcilie, was born.

The intelligent, sympathetic nature of Ludwig Geyer was f inestimable benefit to such a child as Richard, who was his pecial favourite among the children. From his tenderest nfancy Richard breathed the atmosphere of art, and from ne first he was attracted to the theatre. The stage was his ative element, to which he took instinctively with childish *insouciance*. In later life he was a consummate actor; though e never then took a part on the stage at a public performance e sometimes did so at a rehearsal to show how it should be one, and astonished the onlookers with his histrionic gift. He ells us of the lurid impression made on him by Geyer when cting in his best rôle, that of the villain. On more than one ccasion he himself took a child's part, and in his *Autobiography* e tells ludicrous stories of being dressed in tricots, endowed vith wings, and painfully drilled into a graceful pose. When ufficiently advanced to take a speaking part he acted in Kotzebue's *Menschenhass und Reue*—"Menschen ausser der Reihe" he called it—which caused him to neglect his school essons, and often brought him into trouble. He furbished up n old marionette theatre left by his father, carved figures for t "with little skill," dressed them in odds and ends from his isters' workboxes, and proceeded to write a heroic play. Unfortunately, the manuscript was discovered by his sisters nd ridiculed without mercy. He describes the gruesome

spectral effect of certain objects—articles of furniture, beer-jugs—upon him; his dreams were of ghosts and apparitions, and his bed had to be moved away from the rest of the family because of the disturbance that he created with his nightmares. At the same time the more refined feminine taste of his sisters acted as a corrective to his extravagant fancies. Thus we distinguish at this early period two impulses to which his imagination was responsive, the awesome and the sentimental. The family were in poor circumstances. Geyer's salary at the theatre was 1,040 thalers (£156), little enough for a married couple to bring up a family of eight or nine children. His letters tell how he had to pinch himself for the family which he had adopted, and it cannot be doubted that overwork and privation contributed largely to his early death. But his courage never flagged, and he writes hopefully and cheerfully. In course of time the elder girls returned to their home, and there was much gaiety in the house. Rosalie played the piano, Klara sang. Artists, musicians, actors were the most frequent guests in their circle. Carl Maria von Weber, at this time the idol of Dresden society, was frequently of their party. Richard's hankering after the stage met with no encouragement from those who directed his education. His mother almost threatened him with her curse if ever he took up the theatre as a profession. His uncle Adolf, who after the death of Geyer had as the nearest male relative much to say in his education, spoke bitterly, even fiercely against the actor's profession. Even Geyer would have kept at least the younger children from its contamination; Richard he wished to train as a painter, but found little talent. He wanted to paint full figures life-size, and was disheartened when set to do an eye or a flat head. Nor at a later date did he himself wish to take up acting; his school studies and his passion for Hellenic culture had disgusted him with the profession.[1] But if Johanna was serious in her desire to preserve her son from theatrical life, the circumstances in which she allowed him to grow up were scarcely such as would

[1] *Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde; Ges Schr.*, iv. 251.

favourable to her purpose. Surrounded as he was with the fluences of the theatre, while his own fancy was allowed full checked scope, his love for the stage grew stronger and onger. It was no passing childish fancy, but a serious, during impulse, having its roots in the very depths of his aracter. He writes :— [1]

> 'What drew me so strongly towards the theatre was less that which attracts the general public of to-day, the desire for diversion and amusement, than the satisfying thrill of living in an element so far removed from ordinary life ; in the purely fantastic, often gruesome character of its spell. A piece of scenic decoration, a bush or a costume, even a characteristic fragment, seemed to me to come from another world ; it had a fascination like that of a spectre.'

[1] *Mein Leben*, p. 21.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY

In 1821 Ludwig Geyer died, and the family was again left without a head, but not this time entirely destitute. The older children were now off their mother's hands ; Albert and Luise were on the stage. Julius was apprenticed to Geyer's brother, a goldsmith in Eisleben, whither Richard too was sent temporarily to school. Geyer's pictures were well sold, and a pension was forthcoming from the theatre. But it all amounted to little enough, and the burden of supporting the family fell on the shoulders of Rosalie. Mrs. Burrell states, on the authority of Emmy Zocher, a life-long friend of Geyer's daughter Cäcilie, that Rosalie might have married the richest merchant in Leipzig, a Herr Schletter, if she had chosen. She had in the previous year been engaged in Dresden, and went later to Prague, while Luise, aged sixteen, was engaged at Breslau. Upon Richard the loss of his second father was disastrous. Johanna, with the best intentions in the world, was totally incompetent to bring up a child of his temperament in the most critical years of his school period. She remained in Dresden for the present ; in due time Richard went to the Kreuzschule, the gymnasium or classical school of that capital. Regarding his progress in school work we cannot do better than quote his own words :—

> I believe that on the whole I comprehended anything which attracted me vividly almost without actually learning. On things remote from my immediate perception I never even expended any real effort ; this was especially the case with arithmetic, and later with mathematics ; in neither did I ever succeed even in considering the problems laid before me. On ancient languages I bestowed just so much as should enable me to gain the knowledge

necessary for grasping the characteristic features which fascinated me. I was attracted to the Greek language because the figures of Greek mythology engaged my fancy.

rammar appeared to him at this time a sheer hindrance. At later period he bitterly regretted this attitude; he became eeply interested in philological researches at a time when it as too late to learn the elements. He composed verses and ade metrical translations, which he declaimed to a young aster of the school named Sillig. At the age of twelve he was lected to recite Hector's farewell from the *Iliad* and the onologue from *Hamlet*. He wrote a poem on the death of schoolfellow and submitted it for revision and correction to s friendly tutor, who found the language inflated, the images r beyond the comprehension of a child of his age. He often rectly paraphrases words which he has read in the works classical writers, as in a passage from Addison's *Cato* :—[1]

> The stars shall fade, the sun himself
> Grow dim with age . . .

e writes in his poem: "Und wenn die Sonne schwarz vor lter würde, die Sterne müd zur Erde fielen." The circumstance as seemed worth mentioning here as showing the close ttention with which he read foreign literature. The verses, after ne faults had been expunged, were printed and distributed mong his fellow-pupils. This success was a great triumph; began to dawn upon his family that behind all his eccentricities here was potential talent in the youth. He himself resolved o become a poet. Encouraged by Sillig, he began to compose great epic, called *The Battle of Parnassus*, after Pausanias; this nd another venture of a similar kind on the death of Odysseus, rom Hyginus, did not come to anything. Nothing daunted, e set to work on Homer; incredible as it may seem, there no reason to doubt his own story that at the age of thirteen, hen he was in *Tertia*, he completed a translation of twelve

[1] Act v., scene i., in the monologue.

books of the *Odyssey* in his leisure hours. That the first three books were completed by Michaelmas, 1826, is attested by an entry in the school records ; it is also certain that he completed the other nine, for he stated it publicly at a time when there were many people living only too ready to contradict the statement if it had been untrue.[1] He also appears to have translated the *Œdipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles. We see the striving for grand dramatic and poetic creation, but as yet the needful skill is wanting. It will be noticed that his classical taste was confined to Greek; Latin did not attract him, and he made little progress therein, but as the terminal reports on his conduct and diligence while at the Kreuzschule were uniformly excellent, we may presume that Latin was not entirely neglected. For a time he studied English in the hope of reading Shakespeare in the original. To schoolfellows who were interested in what he aptly calls his "fantastic dilettantism" he turned with almost passionate affection. Always susceptible to feminine influences, he was especially fond of his little sister Cäcilie, called "Cile," who shared his thoughts, listened to his compositions, adored her brother as an oracle of wisdom, was his constant companion by day and slept in the same room at night.

In 1826 Johanna with the rest of the family moved to Prague, where Rosalie had been engaged at the theatre, leaving Richard behind to continue his studies at the Kreuzschule. He made walking tours to Prague and to Leipzig, of which he gives a lively account in his *Memoirs*. He was now engaged on a vast scheme which was to put all his other literary undertakings into the shade. It was a gigantic tragedy entitled *Leubold und Adelaide*, described by himself as put together out of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Lear* and *Macbeth* and Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*. His statement that in the course of the play forty-two persons were killed off and had to be brought in as ghosts because the stage was empty may be a humorous exaggeration, but his account of the plot sufficiently shows it

[1] In the autobiographical sketch till 1842 prefixed to his collected works, originally published in the *Zeitung f. d. eleg Welt* on February 1st and 8th, 1843.

have been extravagant beyond all measure. It is the story a young man whose father has been murdered; the father's ghost urges him to extirpate the entire family of the murderer; he spares one, a maiden of whom he is enamoured. Witches weave their spells, ghosts of murdered men pass over the scene, till at last the hero, driven to insanity, slays both his mistress and himself, her blood flowing over him as he gasps his last breath.[1]

Towards the end of 1827 Richard rejoined his family, now settled in Leipzig. He was sent to the Nikolaischule, and we have here to record an act of pedantry on the part of the school authorities of which the consequences affected his whole after-life. In Dresden, as we have seen, he followed his Greek studies, somewhat irregularly it is true, but with enthusiasm, and in the way best suited to his own ardent individuality. In spite of his weakness in Latin and mathematics, he had been to the *Secunda* form, a fairly creditable position for a boy of fourteen.

In Leipzig, perhaps, they found him weak in his declensions, and they turned him down to a lower form. No more serious disaster could have befallen a boy of his temperament. In his rage and disappointment he gave up all interest in classical studies; he idled, and threw away his chance of ever becoming a scholar. In after-life he never learned to read Greek with ease and fluency; his knowledge of the classics was intimate, but it was derived from translations of Donner and others. Notwithstanding the deficiencies of his early education, however, he was profoundly influenced by Greek culture and ways of thought. Many years later, in 1872, he writes to Friedrich Nietzsche:

> I do not think there ever was a boy more enthusiastic for classical antiquity than I was at the Kreuzschule in Dresden. Greek mythology and Greek history took the first place; through them I was first drawn to the Greek language, for which I neglected Latin.

Wagner's debt to Greek literature, especially to Plato, Aristotle,

[1] Some details of the play are given by the Hon. Mrs. Burrell.

Æschylus and Plutarch, has been made the subject of a monograph by a competent scholar, Dr. Georg Braschowanoff. It may be said that the three determining factors of his intellectuality were: (1) Germanic mythology and legend; (2) Greek culture and thought; (3) music.

His father and stepfather both being dead, his Uncle Adolf was the only male relation to whom he could turn for guidance. He fetched him away for daily walks, delighted in the conversation of the great scholar, even when he did not understand it, and listened to his reading of Greek plays in his own translations. The uncle, with the vanity of which he seems to have had an ample share, used to talk far above his head; he liked to inveigh against pedantry, particularly against the pedantry of schoolmasters. The seed fell upon receptive soil; Richard began to feel contempt for his masters. Possibly he showed it, for relations soon became strained between the boy and the school authorities, and we hear of a complaint which the Rektor sent to Adolf. Richard's great tragedy was completed; his uncle read it with amazement and horror, and remarked that he had exaggerated all the most fulsome passages of Lear and Götz.

Great as was the loss of Greek to him, it was partly atoned for by the entry of an almost entirely new phase in his development. Up to his sixteenth year he had shown no aptitude for music, nor was he attracted to it in any very remarkable degree. His musical studies in Dresden were anything but encouraging; he had some sort of instruction on the piano, and played easy arrangements of songs for small hands, but that he showed no special musical gift in his childhood is certain. In all his life he never mastered the technique of the piano.

The appointment in 1817 of Carl Maria von Weber as conductor of the German opera in Dresden is deserving of more than a passing notice. At that time there was no German opera in Dresden; the lyric stage was held by Italians. In the spoken drama the struggle between German and French forms had been brought to a triumphant issue by the brilliant journalism of Lessing, but in musical representation the

ingspiel took a place in public estimation subordinate to ne Italian opera ; nor is this surprising. The stage was a nnction of the Court, a part of the private establishment of ne reigning monarch ; the performers were Court officials, and ere styled *Hof-Kapellmeister*, *Hofsänger*, etc. By the end of the ghteenth century most of the German capitals possessed a erman as well as an Italian company, but in Dresden only alian opera was in vogue at the Court. The King, Friedrich ugust I., had held with Napoleon during the war, and after ne Battle of Leipzig was taken prisoner and sent to Berlin. hen peace was restored he returned to his capital, but was nmusical, and cared little for his opera, while the interest of ne Court society was entirely in favour of the Italians. It as Count Vitzthum who persuaded the King to found a mpany for the performance of German opera, and the man ngaged to be its Kapellmeister was Carl Maria von Weber. mmediately there commenced a battle royal between the Italian nd the German parties, the one headed by Morlacchi, the other y Weber. All who had any pretensions to taste and fashion upported the foreigner ; but Weber held the hearts of the eople. His life was embittered by the intrigues of his rival, ll at last, by the production in Berlin of *Preciosa* (March 14th, 821) and *Der Freischütz* (June 18th) he secured the victory. he success of *Freischütz* was immediate ; it went the round f the German opera-houses, and on January 22nd, 1822, the rst belated performance was given in Dresden.

Throughout the conflict the Geyer house was a meeting-lace for both parties. After Geyer's death both were anxious o gain the services of the very promising young soprano lara, who was now being trained for the stage. Kapellmeister Weber was often at the house, and the Italian party was epresented by a male soprano singer named Sassaroli. The oung Richard had ample opportunity of hearing the respective nerits of Italian and German music discussed. He declared imself resolutely on the side of the Germans, less on musical rounds than from the personal contrast between the monstrous round-bellied colossus," Sassaroli, and the delicate,

refined Weber. *Freischütz* had made a deep impression upon him. He sang Kaspar's solo with diabolical expression, and, as always, he took up its cause with extravagant enthusiasm. He even took some lessons, and made an attempt to play the overture by ear on the piano; he had mysterious dreams of the intervals; the tonic, the third and the fifth appeared bodily before him and expounded their nature. But all this did not amount to more than the visionary freaks of a morbidly excitable schoolboy, and certainly cannot be accepted as evidence of musical talent. His real awakening to music was in Leipzig, and was very sudden. It may be described shortly in his own words: "I remember that one evening I heard for the first time a symphony of Beethoven; I had a fever, was ill, and on recovery became a musician."[1]

The first impulse was from a performance of Beethoven's A Major Symphony in Leipzig. It brought him a new world, and he now determined to occupy himself with music. His great tragedy must have musical *entr'actes*, like *Egmont*. But he soon discovered that music was not so easy as writing verses. He went to a lending musical library—it was the one kept by Friedrich Wieck, the father of Madame Schumann—and borrowed a book on thorough-bass; he kept it till the dues were almost as much as its value, and he was obliged to confess his surreptitious studies to his mother. The whole family was once more thrown into consternation, but they consoled themselves with the thought that the humour would not last. In the summer of 1829 he began to take regular lessons in harmony with one Gottfried Müller, a good musician from the Leipzig orchestra, but with little profit to himself. He found it dry. "Music," he says, "was to me nothing else than a *Daemonium;* the very idea of a rule seemed to me to distort it." He read romantic literature, Hoffmann's *Phantasiestücke*, fell in with a half-witted enthusiast in whom his fancy

[1] The passage is in his little sketch *Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven*. It is put into the mouth of a fictitious personage, but the musician of these sketches is easily recognisable as himself. It is scarcely necessary to say that the words are not to be understood literally.

cognised an embodied Kreisler. He composed several works, pastoral play with orchestra, writing verses and score gether without any plan, or any knowledge of the treatment different instruments; a quartet, etc., all of which were ndemned by a professional friend to whom he showed them s rubbish.

During all this time he was supposed to be at school, but is schoolwork was utterly neglected, and one day his mother ceived a notice that for half a year he had not attended hool at all. Again there was a family conference; Richard plored to be allowed to study music. It was proposed to nd him to Weimar to be trained as a pianist by Hummel. his he flatly rejected. He did not want to be an executant; ne music which he wanted was composition. He promised resume his work at school with diligence if only he might be llowed to study composition as well. So Gottfried Müller, ho had not been paid for his last lessons, was again called to teach him, and he returned to the Nikolaischule. But gain the arrangement did not work. Harmony still bored im, and when the boys of his form were called upon each to mpose a poem as an exercise he sent in one in Greek, which as promptly snubbed. After this he tells us he paid no ttention at all to the school work, but read other books during ne lessons, especially Goethe's *Faust*, not yet finished in its ntirety.

In 1829 Leipzig received a *Hoftheater*, and a new era began. he new conductor of the opera was one Heinrich Dorn, a oung musician who had already acquired some reputation. Richard became acquainted with him at the house of his ister Luise, now Frau Brockhaus. In Leipzig, in addition to is duties at the opera, Dorn occupied himself with teaching; mong his pupils was Robert Schumann. Dorn took a keen nterest in the young student Wagner. Glasenapp has given s from his pen an interesting account of his impression of Wagner some years later:

> I doubt whether there ever was a young composer who had a more intimate knowledge of Beethoven's works than this student

> of eighteen. He possessed most of the master's overtures in scores written by himself; he went to bed with the sonatas and rose with the quartets; he sang the songs and whistled the concertos, for his playing was not good. In short, it was a pure *furor teutonicus*, which, conjoined as it was with high scientific culture and a peculiar intellectual alertness, promised to put forth vigorous shoots.

The transcriptions seem to have been of other composers besides Beethoven, and he tells us in his *Autobiography* of the pains which he bestowed upon the calligraphy; it was by this means that he acquired the beautiful musical handwriting of his later life. The centre round which all revolved was the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, then generally regarded as a fantastic and incomprehensible creation of the master's decline. The score was very difficult to procure, and the only piano arrangement was one for four hands by Czerny. He not only copied the score, but made an arrangement for two hands, which he tried to play. He offered it to the publisher Schott, who though unwilling to publish it, at once gave him the full score of the *Missa solemnis* in return for the MS. It was at this time that he took some lessons on the violin, but only for the purpose of familiarising himself with the technique of the instrument, to aid him in his orchestral composition.

Wagner's sister Rosalie was engaged as actress and singer in the newly-organised theatre, and through her he had easy access to all performances. He saw the plays of Shakespeare, and also Goethe's *Faust* given there for the first time, with his sister as "Gretchen." The performances were controlled from Dresden, and in opera the more fashionable works of Italians were preferred.

In the general enthusiasm for Italian song, which he fully shared, Wagner was almost tempted to forsake his early allegiance to the German school. From this he was for the moment saved by the appearance of a German singer who was destined to exercise a decisive influence over his life, Madame Schröder-Devrient, then in the very height of her powers. She sang as "Fidelio." I will again quote his own words, dictated more than thirty years later:

When I look back on my whole life I can scarcely remember any incident to be compared with this in its effect upon me. All who remember the wondrous woman at this period of her life will testify to the almost demoniacal warmth diffused over him by the human and ecstatic performance. After the theatre I rushed to an acquaintance and wrote a short note to her, declaring that from this day my life had acquired a meaning, and that if ever she heard my name mentioned with praise she should remember that it was she who on this evening made me what I herewith swore to become.

The letter was duly received and was not forgotten. The impression which this performance left upon him was no ordinary one, and it never cooled; it was very different from the passing fancy of a weakling youth. We must not judge of Wagner as we do of other men. Even at this early stage, in spite of all his vagaries and eccentricities, we may recognise, conjoined with an exceptional artistic receptiveness, a profound seriousness of purpose, at present indeed scarcely dawning, but which formed the foundation upon which his future life was based. His first impulse was to compose something which should be worthy of the artist who had inspired him; this was, of course, impossible, and the immediate effect of the event upon him was distinctly unfavourable. Not being able to realise his ideal, he fell into despair; life lost its value for him, and he turned to wild dissipation.

The Paris revolution of July, 1830, was echoed in Germany. Grave disturbances took place in Leipzig in the early days of September of that year; they commenced with the students, but on the movement spreading to the working classes the students, appealed to by the Government and the University authorities, undertook the police duties of the town, the regular police having completely broken down. Richard Wagner, though still at school, fully shared the usual German "Penäler's" admiration for students, and joined their ranks, gaining some status through his connection with the Brockhaus firm, whose presses were threatened by the mob. The storm was quickly allayed by the instalment of the popular Prinz Friedrich as joint Regent, and a change of ministry. Before

this Richard's relations with the school authorities had become so strained that it had been necessary to remove him from the Nikolaischule. In October he entered the Thomasschule and was placed in the highest form, *Prima*. But it was too late; his taste for Greek was now completely overshadowed by his passion for music. During the whole of this time he was composing. He celebrated the accession of the Regent Friedrich with an Overture, in which the principal motive, labelled "Friedrich und Freiheit," was developed in ever increasing glory to a triumphant conclusion. But what he calls "the crown of his absurdities" was reached in an Overture in B♭, which his friend Dorn, out of mistaken kindness, actually included in his programme for performance on Christmas Eve, 1830. Dorn in after years expressed himself not unfavourably on the work, declaring that it contained the germs of all the great effects of his later compositions. The score was written in inks of three different colours, red for the strings, green for the wood and black for the brass. It must have been a wonderful composition; "beside it Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was like a Pleyel Sonata." The first trouble began at the rehearsal; Dorn had the utmost difficulty in persuading the orchestra to play it; the leader declared it to be unmitigated nonsense. The second crotchet of every fifth bar was marked by a single note of the drum *fortissimo*. At first the audience was shocked, but soon fell into incontrollable laughter, in which Wagner himself joined. The performance was a complete fiasco.

Richard had entered the Thomasschule solely for the purpose of using it as a stepping-stone to the University; but he had reckoned without his host. The rather severe test of the *Abiturienten-Examen* is indispensable for matriculation at a German University, and this he could not pass. He was still very young, and it was not too late for him to have made an effort to recover his lost time, but he had little inclination; music had cast its spell over him and had unfitted him for any other occupation. A method was devised by which he could enter the University as a *studiosus musicæ* without matriculation.

It is difficult for those who have no knowledge of German niversity life rightly to follow his doings during his student ys. The German Universities, unlike our older English stitutions, are day schools; the students live in their own lgings or at home and only attend the University for lectures, c. They are not shepherded like the English undergraduate, r is there anything like the same good fellowship between ns and students. The genial supervision which is a dis-nguishing feature of English education is unknown in Germany, here in consequence a youth is exposed to far stronger mptations during the most critical years of his life than he with us. The boy of resolute character, who has a strong eling of self-respect, gains nothing but good from being us thrown upon himself; a Goethe or a Bismarck emerges th honour, strengthened for the battle of life. On the other nd, a weak character has every opportunity of ruining mself, and there is at every University a class of students o idle their time, cut the lectures, and spend their days in inking and duelling and swaggering about the streets. nfortunately, this latter class, being the more conspicuous, ten, but wrongly, create a bad impression of the whole niversity system in the eyes of foreigners. The lack of super-sion from above is to a very large extent compensated by a scipline among the students themselves, exerted through e *Verbindungen*, called *Corps*, *Landsmannschaften*, *Burschen-haften*, etc., which are distinguished by colours, and exist tensibly for the purpose of duelling, a barbarous survival om medieval chivalry almost universally condemned in ermany itself. All we can say is that duelling is not the nal purpose of the better corps, and is only upheld as a eans to an end.

Wagner was received into the University of Leipzig in ebruary, 1831, and began by attending lectures on philosophy d æsthetics. He at once had himself enrolled as "Fuchs" reshman) in the Landsmannschaft *Saxonia*. The corps was highly aristocratic one; among its members at this time e meet with such names as Von Bismarck-Schönhausen, the

brother of the great Chancellor; von Beust, the well-known Saxon and Austrian minister, and many others of distinction. He at once plunged headlong into the wild traffic of a student's life; he courted duels, and challenged or was challenged by some of the most notable fencers of the University; at one time he had half a dozen affairs in hand, one of them with cavalry swords, which was likely to end in death. By extraordinary good fortune he was delivered from them all by the death or failure of his opponents. Deeper and deeper he sank into the mire of dissipation. He turned to gambling with the same fury with which he pursued all else. Music, duelling, everything was forgotten in the excitement of the new distraction; he lost continually, until at last nothing was left. One evening a sum of money, an instalment of his mother's pension, was entrusted to him for delivery to her; he carried it to the gaming table and lost all except one thaler, with which he continued to play. The luck turned; he won back not only the whole sum, but in addition enough to pay off all his debts. He rushed home, delirious with excitement, but a changed being; flung himself on his bed, slept soundly and awoke on the next morning "strengthened, and as it were reborn." He confessed to his mother all that had happened, but now:

> Temptation had lost its hold over me for ever. The world in which I had hitherto struggled with increasing violence suddenly became incomprehensible and unattractive. The gambling frenzy had already disgusted me with the inanity of a student's life; freed from this passion, I was in a new world. I longed for musical education as I had never longed before. My life entered upon a new phase, that of genuine, earnest study.

The similarity of the situation to that of the first Act of *Tannhäuser* will at once occur to the reader. He never again felt any inclination to gamble.

The history of Wagner's "Flegeljahre" is not pleasant reading. I have in this account of his early life followed mainly his *Autobiography*, which I believe for this period, but for certain rhetorical exaggerations, to be absolutely truthful; indeed, it bears the stamp of his brilliant, nervous style, easily

ognisable by those who are familiar with his writings. One
y remarkable feature emerges from the chaos, namely his
bit of regarding everything as possessing living personality,
sympathy with himself. The musical intervals which
plain themselves to him are actual beings, endowed with
e and intelligence; he would no more think of analysing
em than he would wish to anatomise one of his personal
ends. It is, of course, no uncommon thing for a wild and
entious youth to develop into a sober, even a pious maturity;
t what the psychologist wants to know is how a mighty
nius could grow from such an unpromising and ill-regulated
ginning. To those who have had to do with the early develop-
ent of genius the problem is not strange. In the first place it
ust be remembered that he had no father. Had Geyer lived,
d had Richard remained at the Kreuzschule in Dresden, the
rse of his early life might have been different. There was
thing in all his vagaries, nothing which when understood
ll not appear perfectly normal. He described himself in
ter-life as a wild animal tearing at the bars of his cage.
s yet the lion was a cub, dashing itself hither and thither
ithout restraint, without conscious purpose, recoiling, wounded
nd bleeding, only to renew its struggles along another path.
"You must not bring up a young lion in a household; if you
o you will have to serve his humours"; or more probably he
ill break his limbs. Given a Richard Wagner at that age,
nder those conditions, and the course of his life could not be
her than it was. School education makes no distinctions,
nd in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred genius is ruined by
system which is well suited to the average youth. The fault is
ot with genius, which is the embodiment of σωφροσύνη, as art
its apotheosis, and in the one case that remains, where the
nduring impulse for sanity and propriety is stronger than that
r libertinism, there evolves itself a higher order of rectitude,
hich can only find expression in the highest of language, that
f art. These are the kings of mankind, and it is probable
hat their activity is actually strengthened by the strong drink
hich shatters the weakling.

Wagner was always guided by impulse ; at this time impulse was a frenzy, but not always wrong. In his enthusiasm for Beethoven and for Schröder-Devrient he was on the right path, and then the impulse was enduring ; it cheered and strengthened him, and helped him to further efforts ; when he went astray he came to the very verge of ruin, and often saved himself by some outside influence, or some potent individuality. When through his misconduct the Nikolaischule had become impossible he seized upon music, Goethe and the drama, vainly trying to recover his lost taste for Greek ; when on the brink of total destruction at the gaming table he turned seriously to music, and placed himself in the hands of one who of all others was fitted to be his guide and master—Kantor Weinlig.

It has been asserted that Wagner's health was permanently undermined by the excesses of his youth. There is not the slightest ground for such a statement. His wild time did not last more than six months, and the fact is that but for erysipelas and frequent indigestion, from which he suffered from his childhood, he enjoyed robust health all his life. Any person but one with an iron constitution would have swiftly broken down under the strains which he endured. Mrs. Burrell thinks that the stories of his excesses as a student have been much exaggerated for literary effect. That is very likely, but I see no reason to doubt that the facts are as they are stated.

CHAPTER III

EARLY STUDIES AND MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS

HE post of Kantor, *i.e.* choir-trainer and leader of singing the Thomasschule in Leipzig is generally reserved for the remost contrapuntist and teacher of the day in Germany. Not e least distinguished in the brilliant array of successors to bastian Bach is Theodor Weinlig, Kantor from 1823 to 42. He was known for his rigid, almost pedantic adherence the strict style of the early Italian masters.

Till now Wagner had been floundering in the ocean of usic, like to perish from inability to swim. His first studies re not very promising; he still wanted to go his own way, d it seemed likely that Weinlig would give him up as a peless pupil. But in time a deep affection for his teacher s awakened; he submitted to the bridle, and must have own extraordinary ability, for in six months he was dismissed a finished scholar. Some who know the school and its fficulties might feel incredulous as to his proficiency, were it t attested by the consummate mastery which he displays of e art of part-writing, a mastery which could only have been quired by hard and systematic practice under competent pervision, for the art of polyphonic writing is not inborn any man. He practised the most difficult forms, ending th an elaborate double fugue, after which his master said he uld teach him no more, and dismissed him with the words: "Probably you will never have to write fugues or canons; at you have gained is independence; you now stand upon ur own feet, and know that you are able to master the most mplex forms if the need arises." Years later Wagner spoke

more fully to Edward Dannreuther. I give his words slightly curtailed from the article in Grove's *Dictionary of Music:*

> All you can do in teaching composition is to point to some working example, some particular piece, and set a task in that direction. This is what Weinlig did with me. He chose a piece, generally something of Mozart, drew attention to its construction, relative length and balance of sections, principal modulations, number and quality of themes, and general character of the movement. Then he set me the task:—You shall write about so many bars, divide into so many sections, with modulations to correspond; the themes shall be so many, and of such and such a character. Similarly he would set contrapuntal exercises, canons, fugues . . .

One main result of the new influence was the pleasure which he felt in clearness and fluidity; it taught him to appreciate the quality of singableness. The outcome of this study was a series of compositions; a Sonata in B♭ published as Op. 1; a Polonaise for four hands in D (Op. 2), both of which are spoken of by Dannreuther as "straightforward, solid school-work, without a trace of Wagner"; a Fantasie in F♯ Minor; a Sonata in A (Op. 4); and three Overtures, two of which, respectively in D Minor and C, were performed at the *Gewandhaus* concerts in the following winter, 1831–32. The most important work of this period, however, was a Symphony in C with a fugue, performed in the following year at Prague. An Overture and Finale to a play by Raupach, called *Kōnig Enzio*, were also performed at the Leipzig theatre. When Weinlig was asked by Wagner's mother what was due to him for his instruction he replied that he was sufficiently rewarded by the zeal and diligence which his pupil had shown, and refused all other remuneration.

When Wagner had under Weinlig once tasted the sweets of sober and well-directed study the habits and society of his fellow-students attracted him no longer. His feelings were now more honourably engaged by a political event, the vain struggle of the Poles for freedom and independent nationality. He was impressed by the contrast between the heroic, self-

crificing patriotism of the insurgents and the "pedantic avura" of the students, with whom getting drunk, making bts and duelling were reckoned as the highest virtues. The ttle of Ostrolenka on May 26th, 1831, and the subsequent pitulation of Warsaw put an end to the last hopes of e Polish nation under Russian rule, and in February, 1832, e constitution was suspended. Masses of fugitive Poles their way to France passed through Leipzig, where they re acclaimed with enthusiasm by all classes. Some of the re distinguished were quartered in the house of Friedrich ockhaus, and here Wagner, whose sympathies were ardently th the Poles, came into contact with their leader, Count ncenz Tyszkiewitcz, with whom he went to Brünn, in ravia. He continued his journey alone to Vienna, where found Hérold's *Zampa* in the hey-day of its popularity, d to Prague. In Prague he made the acquaintance of the rector of the Conservatorium in that town, Dionys Weber, a table theorist and teacher of the old school, who acknowledged music later than that of Mozart, and also met with other sicians and actors there resident. He had brought his Major Symphony with him, and succeeded in persuading eber to perform it with an orchestra of pupils of the nservatorium. During his stay in the Bohemian capital was not idle; inspired by Beethoven's *Liederkreis*, he mposed the music to a lay "*Glockentöne*" by his schoolfellow, eodor Apel. He also wrote a tragedy entitled *Die Hochzeit*, which he gives an account of the plot in his *Autobiography*:

> A wedding is about to take place; the head of the bride's family invites a young man from another family with which he is at feud in the hope of effecting a reconciliation. He comes, and at night endeavours to enter the room of the bride in the castle tower, where she is awaiting her husband. She rushes at him, hurls him from the balcony, and he is dashed to death. His family, believing him to have been treacherously murdered, fall upon the party at the funeral; the bride, who has already shown signs of incipient insanity and has turned away from her husband, is found dead in the sepulchre by the side of the coffin.

His rather morbid love for gruesome melodrama has evidently not abated in this work ; it is *Leubold und Adelaïde* over again, without its extravagances. He wrote some music for it, which after his return to Leipzig was approved by Weinlig, but as the play was condemned by his sister Rosalie he destroyed it,[1] not from any feeling of wounded vanity, but because of the unbounded confidence which he felt in her judgment. The respectful affection which he felt for this sister is very characteristic. Rosalie, now nearly thirty, was in a certain measure the head of the family at this time, and out of her earnings at the Hoftheater contributed very largely to its support. She possessed, and fully deserved, the esteem and affection of all its members, of none more than of her younger brother. In spite of, or perhaps rather owing to, the divergence of their characters and temperaments he looked up to her with a love as sincere as it was natural, not because of any marked ability in her, for though very successful on the stage and a declared favourite of the public, neither musically nor as an actress were her gifts very remarkable. But she possessed just the qualities which he valued, strength of character united with the grace of femininity, and her quiet, courteous manner was in pleasing contrast with the rather boisterous manners of the rest of the family. During the riotous period of his life at Leipzig there was nothing that he felt more acutely than the estrangement from her which his conduct provoked.

On returning from his journeys Wagner became acquainted with a young journalist named Heinrich Laube, an active leader of the intellectual movement known as "Young Germany," led by Heinrich Heine. It is described in a decree of the Frankfort *Bundestag* as "a literary school, the avowed aims of which are . . . to attack the Christian religion in the most insolent way, to bring existing social principles into discredit, and to destroy all modesty and social order." When it is added that the publications of the Society openly ridiculed the

[1] Or thought he had destroyed it, but it came to light again nearly fifty years later, when the possessor offered to sell it to him for £250. A fragment is published in the fifth edition of his collected works, vol. xi., p. 1.

ate religion and clamoured for free love in the place of rriage, it will not seem surprising, with the ideas then evailing in Prussia, that some of its members soon found emselves in prison, while their books, thus advertised, were gerly read by the public. Nevertheless, they were men of h literary ability; Laube was already a writer of note, and erwards became famous while director of the Burgtheater in enna as reformer of stage management. At a later time Laube nself used to ridicule the movement which had captivated youth, and described the Young Germans as "geniuses who only unhappy because they lack a considerable dose of mmon sense, and because they cannot play upon the world they would upon a bagpipe." Nevertheless, its follies must lead us to underrate the influence which it had for good. was Laube who introduced the modern treatment of crowds n the stage, causing them to take part in the action, instead remaining passive spectators. All Germany was shocked en, in defiance of the classical traditions of Weimar, during rk Antony's oration the populace was seen to move about on scene, some even to turn their backs on the audience! In s, as in the discouragement of the star system, it was Laube o broke the way for the Meiningen Company, which in 1881 onished London with its performances of Shakespeare l other dramatists. As editor of the widely-read *Zeitung die Elegante Welt* he was now able to render considerable vice to Wagner. Their personal relations seem for a short ne to have been somewhat clouded by a rather tactless proposal Laube that he should write an operatic text for Wagner compose. The hero was to be the Polish patriot Thaddeus sciuszko. On discussing the plot they found themselves disagreement about the character of the hero. Never at y time was Wagner able to compose music to the words of other person; not that it was against any principle of his do so, for indeed in one passage of his works he expressly ntemplates the composer of the text and the composer of music as different persons; the reason, instinctively felt him though never formulated, was simply that one man's

thoughts are not those of another. With the approval of Rosalie he refused the libretto. Had he considered his own material interest he would scarcely have refused an offer from such a quarter. As it was, Laube, although a little piqued at his refusal of a libretto originally intended for Meyerbeer, did not abate his interest in Wagner, who now set to work on a libretto of his own, from the Italian of Gozzi.

The C Major Symphony was accepted for performance at the *Gewandhaus* concerts, but it was first tried at a concert of a musical society called Euterpe. The performance at the *Gewandhaus* took place a week later, on January 10th, 1833, and was a great success. In the press Laube expressed himself in terms of the highest praise; the verdicts of other critics were also on the whole very encouraging; the only faults found in the work were due to inexperience and too close an adhesion to classical models, notably to the A Major Symphony of Beethoven. On the other hand Marschner, then the foremost operatic composer of Germany, was unfavourably impressed, and many years later described the work as a mere copy, page for page, of Beethoven's Symphony.

Wagner had now entirely severed himself from the University and its students, and having completed his musical education and made his début in the musical world as composer, he began to look about for the means of earning a livelihood. He accepted an invitation from a musical society in Würzburg, where his eldest brother Albert was engaged as a singer and stage-manager at the theatre, to conduct one of his overtures at a concert. He reached Würzburg towards the end of the month, and through the interest of his brother was engaged at the opera as trainer of the chorus. He found the work very arduous, as he had had no experience, and he made himself useful in doing odd jobs, such as scoring and arranging numbers for performance. Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* was then creating a furore throughout Europe, and it is curious to notice how his unstable mind was taken captive by this bombastic creation. The "æsthetic demoralisation," to use his own phrase, was approved by his brother as indicating the adaptability so

cessary to a musician who has to earn his living. His main cupation was in composing the music to his own libretto, e work already mentioned as taken from the Italian of Gozzi, titled *Die Feen*. At Easter his brother left Würzburg with s wife, leaving Richard to compose his opera undisturbed, cept by the duty of attending to three infant daughters o were left in his charge. His sister Rosalie supplied him th pocket-money, that he might not be a burden on his other, and at the same time took an encouraging interest his composition. The eldest of the babies who formed his congruous charge lived to become the most famous Wagner ger of her day, under the name of Johanna Jachmann-gner. Towards the end of the summer he was offered a st as *Musikdirektor* in Zurich, which he declined, as he wished finish his opera.

It will be worth while, for the sake of following the growth of gner's art, to consider the text of *Die Feen* in some detail:

The play opens after a short fairy trio with a conversation between two of the fairies, Zemina and Farzana, in which they relate how Ada, the fairy princess, has fallen in love with a mortal, Arindal, Prince of Tramond, and call upon all the fairies to save Ada for Fairyland.

Scene 2.—Two men of the royal household, Gunther and Morald, the latter of whom loves Arindal's sister Lora, meet in a desert with Gernot, who has been away with the prince. He tells how Arindal when chasing a doe met with a beautiful lady, with whom he lived for eight years, but was forbidden to ask her name. Morald tells how the king has died of grief at the loss of his son, and the country has become a prey to the enemy Murold, who threatens to marry Lora. Arindal and Ada have two children, but yesterday their happiness was brought to an end by his asking the fatal question. With a peal of thunder her palace fell to pieces. Seeing Arindal approach the three knights retire; he enters, lamenting his loss and calling distractedly upon his fairy wife Ada. Eventually the followers retire; Arindal proclaims to the desert his last farewell to Ada and falls asleep. The desert is then transformed into a fairy garden, with Ada's palace in the background. She appears and sings a cavatina. Arindal awakes and sings a duet with her. A procession of fairies enters; they announce the death of Ada's father and hail her as fairy-queen. She adjures Arindal whatever

terrors may seem to threaten him never to curse her. The act closes with a lengthy ensemble and chorus.

Act II. opens in Arindal's palace with a chorus of people lamenting their overthrow, while his sister Lora vainly tries to infuse courage into them in an aria full of coloratura in the approved Italian style. A messenger entering with the news of Arindal's return gives occasion for another chorus and more coloratura. After a duet of Gernot and his wife Drolla, which has little connection with the rest of the play, the three fairies, Ada, Farzana and Zemina, come to the palace. Ada in another florid aria warns Arindal of his coming trial, and a chorus of warriors about to march introduces the Finale. Ada brings in the children. A fiery abyss opens, into which she throws the children. At that moment the army returns in flight, defeated by the enemy. Their leader tells how the hostile forces were led by Ada. Arindal thereupon curses her. He has now broken his engagement; Ada explains that she fought in his interest, the leader of his army being on the point of delivering it up treacherously; at the same time she restores the children to life and to their father, while she herself goes to be confined in a rock for a hundred years. The army then returns victorious.

Act III.—In the palace. Arindal has become insane and the army acclaims Morald and Lora as their sovereigns. Arindal raves through the hall until he falls exhausted at the foot of the throne. Ada's voice sounds as from the distant rock on one side, on the other Groma, an ancient magician, leads up his propitious spirits and there appear at Arindal's feet a shield, a sword and a lyre, which will enable him to regain his happiness. Farzana and Zemina enter and undertake to conduct him to Ada's rock, hoping to seal his doom. The scene now becomes a fearful cave in the lower world, peopled by demons who sing in chorus. Arindal scatters them with his shield. Then he overcomes two brazen men with his sword. Finally, he reaches the rock where Ada is confined, seizes his lyre and sings to it. Gradually Ada issues from the rock. The scene changes to fairyland, where the fairy-king receives him into his kingdom to live for ever with Ada.

To criticise such a play by any established rules of dramatic propriety would be ridiculous; as a drama it is a caricature. The scenes follow each other in no logical order, but are contrived exclusively with a view to musical "points"; people enter the stage to provide occasion for a chorus; they depart to leave room for a duet or an aria, and return again without

m, without meaning. The music is as little satisfactory the text; technically, indeed, it is a great advance on the tle Sonata Op. 1, composed only a year before, but it is ethoric, overladen, crushed with the weight of instruments d choruses and marching armies. The attempt made in nich to relieve the dullness of the drama by means of rgeous scenic effects only aggravates the evil; the combined rden of orchestra and chorus and scenery added to the cessive length of the work produce an intolerable weariness the audience. The much belauded scene of Arindal's mad- ss might be effective if it were felt as a catastrophe, but ming as it does after two and a half acts of meaningless stian it is not understood, and only delays the longed-for end. ne strange companionship of fairies and campaigning soldiers ight be in place in a medley like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, r comic effect.

The defects of execution are, however, partly redeemed the subject of the story. In itself it has great dramatic ssibilities, but it is quite unfitted for grand opera. It is a mple and touching tale of love and trial; it is the myth of rpheus and Eurydice, and has been dramatised with exquisite licacy by the Indian dramatist Kálidása, whose play *Vikrama d Urvasí* may be regarded as the archetype of the modern rsions. In this play the heavenly Apsaras Urvasí is amoured of the mortal king Purúravas, who returns her ve and resigns his kingship to follow her. In a momentary of jealousy, when her mind is darkened by the curse of a ge for a slip of her tongue when repeating a sacred text, e once speaks unkindly to him. Evil having now gained wer over her, she strays into a grove prohibited to females nd is changed into a vine. The king wanders about distracted, menting his loss and vainly seeking her, till at last, guided y a sacred ruby, he comes to a vine which he embraces, hereupon she is immediately restored to him, and the two e received into the Heaven of Indra.[1]

The opera having been completed and fair-copied by

[1] The best translation is that of Professor H. H. Wilson in *The Theatre the Hindus* under the title of "The Hero and the Nymph."

Christmas, Wagner returned to his home in Leipzig early in 1834, visiting on his way his sister Klara, now married to a singer named Wolfram and living in Nürnberg. In Leipzig he at once set to work to get the opera performed at the theatre; with the aid of Rosalie, who exerted all her influence with the Director, he succeeded in obtaining a promise of its early performance; but a difficulty arose. In the minds of the authorities fairy tales came under the category "Oriental"; that fairies were of German origin was a fact unknown in Leipzig theatrical circles.[1] Wagner, horrified at the thought of his characters masquerading in turban and caftan, vainly remonstrated. Possibly the Director resented being dictated to by a young musician. The season was advancing; the discussions on this and other points caused long delays, and at last it became too late to bring out the opera in that season. His mind turned in another direction and he lost all interest in the work. It was never performed in his lifetime.

The political atmosphere of Europe, and of Germany in particular, had since the general peace been full of inflammable material. The very foundations of society were being questioned. Thinking men were beginning to ask whether the will of the authorities in power was really the supreme motive for human action. Formulas like Bentham's "greatest happiness of the greatest number" were in every mouth. In vain Metternich strove by diplomatic combinations to lay the threatening storm. Nation after nation rose against its rulers; on the classic soil of Hellas men recalled their ancient tradition; "a wily savage posed as Odysseus of Ithaca." Infected by the reading of such works as Heinse's *Ardinghello* and the vapourings of Heinrich Heine, Wagner caught the enthusiasm of the day. His faith in the great composers, in Beethoven and Weber, had already been shaken by the dazzling extravagances of Meyerbeer; to these influences there came a representation of Bellini's *I Capuletti ed i Montecchi* (*Romeo and Juliet*) with Schröder-Devrient as "Romeo." He felt the emphasis laid in that story upon the tyranny of social institutions over the

[1] It must be admitted, however, that names like Zemina and Farzana are a little misleading.

epest and most sacred of human emotions. It seemed to m that all truth, all warmth, all reality of human feeling me from the south, that German music was mere "Zopf" edantic formalism). In an evil moment he published in ube's paper an article ridiculing the *Euryanthe* of his once beloved Weber. "Such," he says later, "was the incon-ivable effect produced upon me by the most unclassical, ost Italian of all music, through the fiery and inspiring presentation of 'Romeo' by Schröder-Devrient."

In this mood in Teplitz one fine morning in the early mmer of 1834 he commenced the composition of a new retto based upon Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* as terpreted by the light of "Young Germany." It was called *as Liebesverbot*, "The Prohibition of Love." Like Shake-eare's play, it was directed against hypocrisy, but whereas e English play ends in a reconciliation of the moral law with e decrees of society, *Das Liebesverbot* is described by its thor himself as an open glorification of sensuality.[1] To in a warmer atmosphere he transferred the scene to Sicily; e Duke becomes a King and his deputy, Angelo, is a German *atthalter* named Friedrich, who endeavours to introduce erman prudery among hot-blooded people of the south. In e main the story is the same as in *Measure for Measure*, and me of the names are retained. Claudio is about to be executed r an irregular connection, but may be saved if his sister abella, the novice in a nunnery in Palermo, will yield herself the embraces of the *Statthalter*. As in Shakespeare, Marianne, ere already married to Friedrich, takes the place of Isabella. ll is right by the return of the King; Claudio is pardoned, Marianne remains the wife of the *Statthalter*, and Luzio marries abella. The details of the plot are as turgid and artificial as n the feeblest of Italian operas.

The music was not composed until the winter of 1835–36. Wagner in a later work dwells upon the great contrast noticeable between the music of *Die Feen*, inspired by Beethoven and

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, i. 28. His phrase is "freie Sinnlichkeit," which has not quite e same flavour as our word sensuality. Sinnlichkeit means the quality of ffecting the senses, not necessarily sexuality. I shall have more to say on is word later on.

Weber, and that of *Das Liebesverbot*, when he was under the spell of Schröder-Devrient's rendering of French and Italian song. He says:

> The music of *Das Liebesverbot* exerted in advance an influence upon the subject-matter and its treatment, and was itself the reflection of the influence of modern French and (for the melody) even of Italian music upon my strongly agitated emotional receptivity. Anyone who compares the music with that of *Die Feen* will scarcely be able to conceive how within so short a time such a complete subversion of my tendency could have been possible. The course of my artistic development from this time onward was the reconciliation of the two.[1]

To us, indeed, Wagner's severe condemnation may seem to be a little exaggerated. On the ground of moral propriety there is really very little to which serious exception would be taken if it were represented on an English stage. If is far from being a glorification of free love; its obvious purpose is the castigation of hypocrisy in the person of the German *Statthalter*. It cannot be compared, for licentiousness, with some of the productions of our own Byron and Shelley of the same period, nor with the witty impudences of Heinrich Heine. Only these were *better poets;* that is to say, they possessed in a higher degree the faculty of persuading men by the seductive sweetness of their verse. Wagner was as yet but a tyro, both in music and in verse composition, still feeling his way and often straying into paths unsuited to his genius. Here he was trying Italian opera, a genre of its own, and his imperfect mastery of the technique of that art will be apparent to anyone who compares his work with that of Bellini or Rossini. It failed because it was badly written and dull.[2]

[1] *Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde; Ges. Schr.*, iv. 255.

[2] There are, of course, always some who will scent licence and indecency in anything. I have even heard the last act of Siegfried—surely the purest and most masterly treatment of a delicate situation to be found in the whole range of the drama—condemned on that score. When questioned the objector generally asserts that the situation is *suggestive*. Undoubtedly; but the *response* to the suggestion is in the hearer's own mind. There is a certain, though limited, truth in the opinion expressed by an art critic in a court of law a few years ago that a work of art cannot *per se* be either moral or immoral, but can only be well or badly written. The immorality is generally in the hearer's own mind.

Incidentally it may be mentioned that in *Das Liebesverbot* he for the first time makes use of a musical phrase known as the "Dresden Amen," which has been used by so many musicians. It is said to be of very ancient origin, and is in regular use in the Catholic Church in Dresden. Its form as there sung is given in musical Example 8A.

CHAPTER IV

MAGDEBURG, KÖNIGSBERG, RIGA

DURING his stay at Teplitz in the early part of the summer of 1834 Wagner was accompanied by his young school-friend Theodor Apel, who had now completed his University course at Heidelberg and contemplated adopting a literary career. Apel was the son of wealthy parents, and himself the owner of a fine estate and country residence. They went on to Prague, where Wagner introduced him to his former friends the daughters of Count Pachta, two young ladies with whom he carried on an intermittent flirtation.[1] On reaching home in July he found awaiting him an offer of the post of *Musikdirektor* to the Bethmann Company of Magdeburg, then on its summer tour at Lauchstädt, near Halle, on the Saale. Thither he repaired at once, and found a bankrupt company, a feckless director with a staff of broken-down, dissipated actors and singers living in squalid penury. His first impressions were so unfavourable that he had almost made up his mind to throw up the appointment and return to Leipzig, but on being shown the room intended for his lodging he met with the principal actress, named Minna Planer. The account of the impression which she made upon him may be given in his own words :[2]

> Her appearance and behaviour were in striking relief to those of the rest of the company. The young actress was remarkable for the pleasing freshness of her features, while her assured movements and earnest demeanour added dignity to the kindly expression of her face. The scrupulous tidiness and quiet simplicity of her dress completed the contrast.

[1] His love for the elder, Jenny, seems to have been serious for a time ; see his letter to Apel of December 16th, 1832.

[2] *Mein Leben*, i., p. 109.

Wagner returned to Leipzig, but only to make the final arrangements for his move and to bid farewell to his friend Laube, against whom a decree of expulsion from Saxony had been issued at the demand of the Prussian Government, doubtless on account of the political tendencies of his journal, although the charge, as usual in such cases, does not seem to have been communicated to him.

His duties in Lauchstädt began with a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. As he had never before conducted anything but his own compositions the task was no easy one, but he sustained the ordeal with credit, and soon became popular with the executants as conductor. He was lodged on the floor immediately below Minna Planer and before long was on terms of intimate friendship with her. With the rest of the company it was impossible for him to feel much sympathy. They lived a Bohemian life, their salaries were all in arrears and could only be obtained by winning favours from the Director's wife, who bestowed them only upon one at a time. A speedy collapse of the whole concern was inevitable. The only person in contrast to the rest of the disreputable crew was the precise, decently-living Fräulein Planer. The unfortunate girl, now aged twenty-five,[1] had good reason for wariness amid such surroundings. She had, living in her home, a child who passed as her younger sister, but was really her daughter. At the age of sixteen she had fallen a victim to a young nobleman, who, taking advantage of her youth and inexperience, had first deceived and then deserted her. But now her life was faultless.

> "I soon discovered," he says, "that 'Young Europe,' *Ardinghello* and *Das Liebesverbot* were here out of place; that between 'Fairy Amorosa' and 'honest citizen's daughter' seeking a respectable means of livelihood[2] a very definite distinction had to be observed."

[1] I have accepted the date of her birth stated on her gravestone in Dresden as September 5th, 1809, as that seems to be supported by the preponderance of evidence; but it is disputed. A discussion of the question will be found in *Die Musik*, i. 2, p. 786, and i. 3, p. 1,401.

[2] Theatrical characters or types.

With the buoyancy of youth Wagner accepted the situation as he found it; he threw himself enthusiastically into the theatrical life, revelled in the delight of wielding a conductor's bâton, and lived on the best of terms with musicians and actors. After a few weeks in Lauchstädt the company migrated to Rudolstadt in Thuringia, where while continuing his duties as conductor he occupied himself with the libretto of his opera, and composed a Symphony in E Major, of which an account has been given by Wilh. Tappert.[1] It is still in the Beethoven manner, but is incomplete; he broke off in the middle of the slow movement, evidently out of humour with himself in that vein. In October he returned with the company to Magdeburg, breaking the journey for a few performances at Bernburg.

After the opening of the winter theatrical season there was again some talk in Leipzig of the promised performance of *Die Feen*. The Overture was given in Magdeburg and was well received, but now in the eagerness of his new ideas he had lost all interest in the opera. Schumann announced it in his journal for performance before the close of the year, but again there were objections and delays, and the work was set aside for good. In the meantime Wagner was continuing his duties as conductor in Magdeburg. The fiery enthusiasm which he infused into the orchestra and chorus earned the appreciation of the public and the press, especially in a representation of Weber's *Freischütz*. He also produced in the course of the season an opera by his friend Theodor Apel, entitled *Columbus*, with an overture and some additions of his own. In April Schröder-Devrient sang several times in her best rôles as guest. She was not now engaged at any theatre, but toured about the country, singing in various places. She offered to come to Magdeburg and sing in a private concert to be arranged by Wagner; her co-operation seemed to promise a brilliant success for the concert, which would enable him to pay some of his accumulating debts. Since his appointment, not having been attracted by the *Frau Direktor*, whose place, moreover, was

[1] *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, 1886, Nos. 40, 41.

already occupied by the bass singer, he had received scarcely any of the salary due to him, and had been compelled to live on credit. Nor was he himself entirely free from blame for the condition of his affairs. His ordinary living may have been sufficiently modest, but we hear of reckless outbursts of extravagance, entertainments with oysters and champagne and the like. In this way commenced the financial embarrassments which embittered the whole of his subsequent life. The concert which was to have given him relief proved a complete failure. Through a misunderstanding of the programme the idea had got abroad that Madame Devrient did not intend to sing, and that he was making an unauthorised use of her name to advertise his concert—a trick unfortunately only too frequently practised by managers of theatres and concerts. The public, resenting the supposed dishonesty, boycotted the concert, and when the day arrived very few tickets had been sold. Madame Devrient, punctual to her engagement, arrived in Magdeburg and sang, but to empty benches, and when the accounts were made up on the next morning instead of a large profit there was a deficit. Even more serious than the financial loss was the insult to the singer. She, the spoiled child of every capital in Europe, was not accustomed to be flouted by the public of a provincial town, where she was only singing out of friendship to its leader. She, however, realised the situation, suppressed her feelings, and parted on the best of terms with the concert-giver, if not with the town.

The affairs of Magdeburg theatre were going from bad to worse. The performances had so deteriorated under the *régime* of Herr Bethmann that they ceased to attract the public, and the receipts from season subscription tickets had fallen from 24,000 thalers to 5,000. The season closed early in May, and the treasury being empty, the actors and musicians had to be satisfied with payment by orders for boxes at future performances. Wagner was now definitely engaged to Minna Planer, and on returning to Leipzig at the beginning of the vacation induced her to pay a flying visit to that town that he

might introduce her to his family. It was just at this time that Mendelssohn came to Leipzig to conduct the Gewandhaus concerts in place of the easy-going Pohlenz, and the event had a profound influence on the taste of the public. Mendelssohn was then almost at the height of his fame, and Wagner presented him with the MS. score of his C Major Symphony, hoping to gain his favour, but nothing resulted. At a private concert there was a performance of the Columbus Overture, in which six trumpets figured, but it met with no approval from the audience in its then classic mood, and Wagner soon afterwards left the town. After a visit to Dessau and an excursion with Minna and her sister to Saxon Switzerland and a visit to Laube, now released and living in Kösen, he again came to rest in Leipzig. He had now to arrange for the coming winter season. All his plans were controlled by the wish not to be parted from his *fiancée*, with whom he was extravagantly in love, and he applied to Bethmann for re-engagement. In the meantime prospects had somewhat improved in Magdeburg. Some of the leading citizens of the town, realising the danger of being left without any theatre at all, had clubbed together to bolster up the company, and a generous contribution had been added by the King of Prussia. The difficulty was to find a few good performers, and Wagner offered to make a tour at his own expense round some of the theatres and collect what he could. Whence the funds came for these expensive trips we are not told, but he had evidently found assistance in some quarter and added to his liabilities. He was carried away by his ever sanguine temperament, and disaster only nerved him to new effort. Undeniably it was just this reckless handling of money with utter disregard of consequences to himself, united with the indomitable firmness of his character and his unfaltering belief in himself and loyalty to his art that enabled him to win through in the end. Letters to his mother which have been preserved reveal his feelings with unusual frankness,[1] and his careless self-will led to a quarrel with his wealthy and

[1] *Familienbriefe*, pp. 15, 16, of July 25th, 1835, and May 31st, 1836.

influential brother-in-law Friedrich Brockhaus, and in fact to a complete breach with the whole of his family except his mother.

The history of his recruiting expedition is told in his *Autobiography*. He started with full powers to engage such artists as he selected, and visited Teplitz, Prague, Karlsbad, Nürnberg, Würzburg, Frankfurt, returning through Leipzig to Magdeburg. He had only found three singers, one of whom proved a failure, but others came up, including his sister Klara with her husband Wolfram, both of them active on the stage at Nürnberg, and by great exertions and the adoption of new methods he succeeded by the commencement of the autumn season in forming a really good company for the performance of such works as Spohr's *Jessonda*, Bellini's *Norma*, and the usual favourites, *Freischütz*, *Masaniello*, etc. One point gained was that the performers could, at least for the present, reckon upon getting their salaries. The public, however, had lost faith; it remained indifferent to the theatre, and there was little permanent improvement in the general position of the company.

In the winter of 1835–36 he wrote the music to *Das Liebesverbot*, and by the time it was completed the insolvency of Herr Bethmann had been declared in the newspapers. There was a general stampede among the orchestra and performers, but those who remained arranged benefit concerts for themselves, and there were still enough to make a representation of the opera possible before the dissolution of the company. But a new difficulty arose. The censor, without troubling to read the libretto, took exception to its title and refused permission for its performance—just before the Easter festival; so the title had to be altered to *Die Novize von Palermo*, the name by which it has afterwards always been known. Two representations were projected; the proceeds from the first were to be taken to cover expenses, those of the second to be for the composer. The best singers were already gone; time was pressing; only ten days were left for study and rehearsal of an extremely difficult work; it was an impossible task.

But Wagner's courage rose with every difficulty. He infused his own enthusiasm into the performers, rehearsed morning and evening, supported failing memories by prompting and himself singing from the conductor's desk. By dint of unparalleled efforts he achieved something resembling a performance (March 29th, 1836), but it was so bad that although the house was crowded the audience, having no libretti, understood nothing and left the theatre having no idea what it was all about. Hoping for a better result at the second performance he fixed the entrance prices at the highest figure possible, and expected another full house. A quarter of an hour before the time fixed for the curtain to rise he looked from behind the scene at the audience; there he saw: his lodging-house keeper with her husband and a Polish Jew in full costume. He still hoped for further arrivals, when suddenly an uproar began behind the scenes. Herr Pollert, the husband of the "Isabella," seeing that there was nothing more to risk, seized the opportunity to pay off an old score against "Claudio" for flirting with his wife. "Isabella" fell into hysterics; others who had grievances with each other joined the fray and a general fight began. They were parted with some difficulty, but all hope of a performance that evening was at an end; the stage-manager stepped before the scene and announced to the little audience that it was postponed (April 1st, 1836). After this the company dispersed, and Wagner was left with his debts. An attempt to bring out his opera in Leipzig met with no success. It was revived at Munich on March 24th, 1923.

On May 18th he went to Berlin, where Spontini was all-powerful. Here he fell in with one Cerf, director of the Königstädter theatre, who was profuse of promises to him, wished to engage him as conductor, etc., all of which came to nothing. Nor were his efforts to get his opera accepted more successful, and the two months which he spent in the Prussian capital were completely wasted. He was, however, in some measure consoled by the renewal of his friendship with Laube, who was in Berlin awaiting the decision of the courts

in his law-suit, and was helpful to him in many ways. He reaped much benefit from attending a performance of *Ferdinand Cortez* conducted by Spontini himself, in which the decisive rhythms and the accuracy and fire of the rendering left an enduring impression upon him. He also composed an overture, inspired by the memory of his Polish friends, entitled "Polonia."

During this time Minna Planer had not been idle; she had secured for herself an appointment at the theatre of Königsberg, and wrote to Wagner urging him to offer himself for the post of conductor which seemed likely to fall vacant. In July he joined her in Königsberg, and soon found himself the centre of a theatrical dispute. The conductor, Schubert, was due to leave for Riga, where he held a position, and where his wife was settled, but having a tenderness for one of the singers at Königsberg was disinclined to relinquish his post in that town, and naturally looked upon the new-comer as an intruder bent upon ousting him. A violent feud therefore arose between the partisans respectively of the conductor in possession and the conductor in expectation, waged with the bitterness usual in German theatres. The unfortunate director, Anton Hübsch, found himself between two fires; while his musicians were straining every nerve to make life impossible for Wagner and to force him to leave, he was doing his utmost to keep him ready at hand lest in the end he should be left without a conductor. An influential outsider, named Abraham Möller, interfered to stir up a quarrel between the director, Hübsch, and the conductor, Schubert, in the interest of Wagner. It was Minna who, under his guidance, at last cut the knot; by using the interest of Wagner's sister Klara and of her husband she induced the Danzig theatre to offer her a post together with Wagner. This forced the hand of the director at Königsberg, who could not afford to lose Minna, and the result was a contract on very favourable terms for his appointment at Königsberg as conductor from Easter of the following year (1837). After this the speedy marriage of Wagner and Minna Planer was inevitable; on that point all were agreed. Abraham

Möller was especially active in arranging the preliminaries, and it was settled that the wedding and his appointment should be celebrated simultaneously by a grand benefit performance of *La Muette*. All was done according to programme; the performance took place on November 23rd, and the wedding on the following day.

How this strange union came to be possible is a question which has often been asked; nor is it easy to solve. The view that Wagner was taken captive by the attractive exterior of a woman four years older than himself overlooks the fact that her consent was just as necessary as his own. Wagner's infatuation is intelligible enough. It was less her personal attractions that drew him so strongly towards her than the instinctive feeling that she possessed just those qualities which seemed necessary for his happiness and his success—reposeful self-possession in the common affairs of life, easy good nature, and the desire to please those around her—exactly the qualities which he found later in life in Cosima von Bülow, and in which he was himself so sadly deficient. The motive which induced her to marry him is more difficult to fathom. It was certainly not love; there is not the slightest indication that she was in love with him, and love was an emotion foreign to her cold, passive temperament. Had she been, as some have supposed, a scheming woman who, feeling that she was getting on in years, took advantage of a young man to settle herself in life, she would surely have chosen a more promising subject to exercise her wits upon than Wagner. Without necessarily accepting all Wagner's frank self-accusation, without assuming as he does that the cause of the disastrous marriage was his own violent importunity, we may well admit that his uncontrollable temper, his erratic, boundless schemes, to say nothing of his serious financial entanglements, made him a most undesirable partner in the life of a young woman. All this she must have known full well; she had abundant proof of it before they were married, for the bickerings during the time of their engagement were incessant. Minna herself had very fair abilities; although only a moderately good actress, she

was a great favourite with the public, and a valuable asset to every theatrical company to which she attached herself, and was quite conscious of her value. She had no extravagant wants ; her only desire was to follow her profession and to live a quiet and contented life without anxiety for the future. But she was far from being faultless ; her most amiable quality, that for which she was so eminently fitted by nature, the desire to please, sometimes led her to commit grave indiscretions, which naturally gave occasion to jealous outbursts on the part of so ardent a lover as Wagner. How then did she, being what she was, come to marry such a man as Richard Wagner ? Perhaps she had sufficient insight to divine the abilities, as yet latent, that were within him, and hoped that when once he had put forth his powers and obtained recognition he would lose his restless habits and settle down to a quiet life. If so, she was fatally deceived, and the consequences showed themselves only too soon. One circumstance to which allusion has already been made must always be borne in mind in this connection, the fact, namely, that she was not alone ; with her on their marriage, or soon after, Wagner had willingly taken over the charge of her daughter Natalie, now aged ten or eleven. It is probable that the wish to provide a home for her daughter weighed strongly with her in choosing a husband.

Four months had yet to elapse before he could enter upon his new duties at the opera house. In the miserable circumstances in which he found himself placed, and in despair of ever getting a favourable hearing in Germany, he had often dreamed of Paris. He made a detailed sketch for the libretto of a new opera, *Die hohe Braut*, from a novel of the same name, and sent it through his brother-in-law, Friedrich Brockhaus, who had a branch or agency in Paris, to no less a person than Eugène Scribe, then the most famous dramatist in Paris, and doubly famous through his connection with Meyerbeer, whose *Huguenots* appeared in the same year. He proposed that Scribe should write the French words to his sketch and send them to him for the composition of the music,

with a view to its being brought out at the *Opéra Comique*. Not having received any reply after six months he again wrote to Scribe enclosing the MS. of *Das Liebesverbot*. While waiting he composed an overture on "Rule Britannia," and occupied himself with a farce on a subject taken from the *Arabian Nights*, entitled *Männerlist grösser als Frauenlist*,[1] or *Die glückliche Bärenfamilie*, suitable for a small theatre.

The plot of *Die hohe Braut* is taken from a novel. It employs familiar stage devices; a pair of lovers, Bianca and Giuseppe, are separated by social rank. Giuseppe, falsely accused of treason, is arrested with his comrade, and they are liberated by two friends disguised as priests. Bianca is married to a nobleman, who is then stabbed by Giuseppe. Bianca dies of poison in her lover's arms and he is killed by the approaching enemy. The only interest which it has for us is as exhibiting the poet's taste for theatrical show and bloody catastrophe; of any higher poetic purpose there is not a trace in any of these early dramas except *Die Feen*. He afterwards gave the libretto to a friend named Johann Kittl, who composed the music and in 1848 brought it out as an opera under the name of *Bianca und Giuseppe*, or *Die Franzosen vor Nizza*, in Prague, where it had a considerable success.

The domestic felicity to which the young couple had looked forward did not endure for long. They lived in wretched poverty. Early in April, Schubert having at last taken his departure, Wagner assumed his duties as conductor, but the receipts of the theatre had so declined that no enduring engagement was likely. He accordingly cast about for employment elsewhere, and turned his eyes towards the German theatre in Riga, where his Leipzig friend Dorn was active in a musical capacity. Dorn's reply was far from encouraging; it was the familiar story of grossly inefficient management and consequent straitened finances. In May Minna's conduct gave him cause for serious uneasiness. She permitted a certain Herr Dietrich, a wealthy merchant of the town, to pay her attention; her husband grew uneasy and violent scenes

[1] The entire libretto with that of *Die glückliche Bärenfamilie* is given in *Ges. Schr.*, vol. xi.

ensued. On the morning of May 31st, on returning from a long day's work at the theatre he found that his wife and her daughter had disappeared from his home and that Dietrich was also missing. It was discovered that they had gone in the direction of Berlin, whither Wagner endeavoured to pursue them, accompanied by his ever helpful friend Möller. After driving some fifty miles in the coach they had to give up the chase, and returned to Königsberg. It was ascertained that Minna had gone with her daughter to her mother in Dresden. Dietrich, after accompanying them a short distance, had returned to his home. On hearing the truth of what had happened Wagner's indignation gave way to a softer mood; his only thought was how to recover her. He slunk away from his home, travelled all the way to Dresden, and full of penitence, entreated her to return to him. Fortunately he was able to hold out hopes of an improvement in his position, as he was on the point of concluding an engagement with the Riga theatre, which was about to be re-organised under new management; a week later he met the new Riga director in Berlin, and the contract was signed on conditions sufficiently favourable to permit of Minna's retirement from the stage, while he occupied the post of conductor. These conditions were accepted by Minna; they were reconciled, and went to stay together for a time at Blasewitz, a suburb of Dresden; the past was forgotten and forgiven on both sides, and to all appearances perfect harmony was restored. One day she announced her intention of going for a trip with some friends. Inquiry showed that Herr Dietrich had come to Dresden, that she had joined him in his hotel, and had left in his company.

Overwhelmed by this new disaster Wagner remained in Blasewitz, finding some relief in the society of his sister Ottilie, then living with her husband, Hermann Brockhaus, in Dresden, and in renewed artistic production. Before Minna's elopement he had read Bulwer Lytton's *Rienzi*, and under the inspiring spell of the picture there presented of the great tribune he sketched a grand opera. Meyerbeer was still the object of his deepest worship, and *Rienzi* was composed in avowed imitation

of his style, and for performance at the *Grand Opéra*. The scenic and musical splendour of the Paris opera-house, with all its massive and passionate dramatic effects were ever before his vision; his aim was not to imitate, but rather to emulate and surpass its vast achievements:

> My enthusiasm was kindled by the subject, and I included nothing in the sketch which had not a direct relation to it. My immediate concern was with Rienzi himself; not till I had satisfied myself with regard to him did I make for the *Grand Opéra*, which formed as it were the artistic spectacles through which I unconsciously saw my material. Nothing seemed to me of any moment save as seen through these spectacles, under the form of five acts with five brilliant finales, hymns, processions and musical clashing of arms. Nor did I bestow more pains on the diction and versification than were necessary to produce a brilliant operatic libretto, free from triviality. I did not begin by writing duets and terzets; they came quite of themselves, because I viewed my subject through the opera. I did not, for example, seek a pretext for ballet, but with the eye of an operatic composer I came quite spontaneously upon a festival to be given by Rienzi to the people, in which a drastic scene from ancient history should be represented.[1]

At the approach of the theatrical season he gradually found his way to Riga, where the theatre had been redecorated, and a new era was to begin under the auspices of wealthy residents. The person chosen as director was Karl von Holtei. Wagner induced him to engage a sister of his wife, Amalie Planer, a young and gifted singer, for Riga. He had met her in Berlin, and she told him that Minna, after having spent some time with her lover in Hamburg, had returned to her home in Dresden, her health having completely given way. Wagner treated the communication coldly, and in course of time received a communication from Minna herself, confessing her fault and imploring his forgiveness. He replied at once, took all the blame upon himself, invited her to return to him with her sister Amalie, and promised that the subject should never be mentioned between them, a promise which he strictly kept.

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iv. 258.

A little later, in October, they joined him. Minna was too broken in health to take up any work on the stage. Amalie, on the other hand, was a welcome addition to the company as a singer and soon became popular. It was at this time that he received news of the death of his sister Rosalie, who had in the previous year married a Dr. Marbach, *Privatdozent* in Leipzig, and died at the birth of her first child. The loss to him was irreparable. Rosalie had been the first to recognise the possibilities that were within him, and her influence over him in the dark days of his student life had kept him from despair.

Wagner's duties as first conductor were to direct the performance of the larger operas; smaller pieces, Singspiele, etc., being entrusted to the second conductor, Franz Löbmann. In Riga he was able to renew his acquaintance with his former Leipzig friend, Heinrich Dorn. He composed several pieces for occasional performance. His main occupation, however, at this time was with the libretto of *Rienzi*. The director, von Holtei, was a wandering genius. He had no home; he had been dramatist, stage-manager, secretary and actor in turn in various places, and holds a certain position in the history of German literature as a composer of operas which long held their place on the stage, and especially of songs which to this day are exceedingly popular. As to the ideals which he followed they may be gathered from a description of him by Wagner at a later period:

> He declared frankly that he could do nothing with what is called a sober and respectable ("solid") company of actors. Ever since the theatre had been led into the sure paths of humdrum respectability it had departed from its proper function; he could best maintain its character with a strolling band of comedians.

But at least he insisted upon a thoroughly correct and finished performance of the works undertaken. Nor was he wanting in genius; his social gifts were considerable, and he was very popular in the German society of the town. Ample funds had been collected, and the theatre, although very small, had been thoroughly put into order. Wagner's character and habits

had undergone a great change; deeply occupied with the subject of his new opera *Rienzi*, he no longer lived on terms of good fellowship with his colleagues at the theatre, as he had always done at Magdeburg and at Königsberg, but confined himself to his theatrical duties. Artistically he was sobered, and began to turn away from the frivolous tendencies which had held him in bondage. His salary is given by Glasenapp at 800 roubles, which, with the income of Amalie, who joined their household, would, but for the importunities of creditors, have enabled them to live in a modest way with some degree of comfort. Minna proved an excellent housekeeper, and all went well until their partnership was dissolved by Amalie's engagement to an officer in the Russian Guards. In June, before he went to Riga, he had received a polite but not very encouraging reply from Scribe, and had written again, sending the letter unfranked "to ensure safe delivery." Again Scribe sent no reply; it is not likely that either he or Meyerbeer had the leisure to trouble themselves about an unknown composer whose works showed no promise of any great success in Paris.

The Riga season opened on September 13th with a Singspiel entitled *Mary, Max, und Michel*, conducted by Wagner. The new theatre arrangements had attracted a large audience; Wagner had composed as an extra number a romance for the bass singer, and all went off satisfactorily. Many important works were produced in the course of the season, and the results were artistically most encouraging. His personal relations with the individual members of the company were less satisfactory; the prudent reserve with which he held aloof from the rest of the company, together with the extreme rigour of his method of handling the orchestra, his insistence upon sufficient rehearsal to ensure a high standard of performance, brought him many enemies. The usual theatrical cabals were formed, complaints were brought to the director, who though secretly approving his measures, regularly sided against his conductor. Other elements of disturbance intervened. Holtei declared that the company was too respectable, and in accordance with his principles himself made improper

proposals to Minna. She was now living on cordial terms with her husband and indignantly rejected the attempts made to pervert her loyalty to him. Wagner knew nothing at the time of what was going on; Minna, wishing to spare him, and dreading the consequences of a quarrel between him and the director, wisely kept silence for the time being. In December came his benefit performance, for which he chose his old favourite, Bellini's *Norma*. It is mainly remarkable for having been the occasion for a reassertion of his faith in Italian melody. An extract from an article which he wrote to the local paper has been reproduced in the *Bayreuther Blätter*:[1]

> Song, song, and again song, ye Germans! Song is indeed the language in which man expresses himself musically, and when it is not produced and maintained in the same independence as every other cultured language you will not be understood. Any village schoolmaster can correct what is bad in this Bellini—that is well known; it is quite irrelevant to mock at such. Had he learned from a German schoolmaster he would have done better, but it is to be feared he would have unlearned his gift of song. Let us leave to this happy Bellini the special cut of his musical pieces, which he shares with all Italians, his crescendos, his tutti, his cadenzas regularly following the theme, all those mannerisms which annoy us so much. These are the standing forms, and the Italian knows no others. When we think of the endless disorder, the confusion of forms, of periodic structure and modulation which we find among so many German composers we may be allowed even to long for those standing Italian forms to bring order into the tangle.

We see that he was quite alive to the characteristic defects of Italian music, but thought that they were outweighed by the song-melody. On the stereotyped forms of the Italian opera Wagner was in later life more severe, but his love of Italian song-melody never left him, and is distinctly evident in his own musical style.

With the end of the year the term of the guarantor syndicate was completed, and the unrestricted management passed into the hands of Holtei. Of musical events there is little to relate.

[1] December, 1885, quoted in Glasenapp, i. 293.

In February a concert was given by the famous Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull. In March Wagner himself arranged a concert with orchestra in the local concert room, in which his overtures "Columbus" and "Rule Britannia" were given. It was at this time that he met with Heinrich Heine's *Memoiren des Herrn von Schnabelowopski*, containing the story of the Flying Dutchman. In June the company went to Mitau for a short summer season; on November 1st an opera, *Der Schöffe von Paris*, by his friend Heinrich Dorn, was produced under his direction. All through the year 1838 he was working at his *Rienzi*, of which he had completed the text and begun the composition in the summer; by the spring of 1839 the first two acts were completed. In February of that year Holtei suddenly and mysteriously disappeared from Riga, giving out that he was engaged on a professional tour, but he never returned and his duties were undertaken by one Hoffmann. Before leaving Holtei had arranged for Wagner's dismissal at the end of the season, and in March Wagner received notice thereof, with an intimation that Heinrich Dorn had been appointed his successor. Wagner indulges in some petulant lamentation on the "treachery" of his friend Dorn in supplanting him, but it is abundantly evident that his situation in Riga was rapidly becoming impossible, partly through his own fault. Prudence and tact towards persons with whom he was at enmity were qualities unknown to Richard Wagner at this period of his life, and his most uncompromising apologists must admit that with his intemperate language he often put himself in the wrong, although Glasenapp quotes, without one word of disapproval, a letter to the fiancée of one of the singers for which no terms of condemnation could be too severe. It is necessary, however painful, to record these aberrations from common decency if we are to form a just estimate of his character, and to understand why, in spite of many noble qualities, he made so many enemies.

However much Wagner was out of sympathy with his fellow-workers, his dismissal came very inopportunely for himself. After nearly two years of settled life with a fixed income his

domestic affairs were now better ordered than they had ever been before. But it determined him to a move which he had long contemplated, namely to give up his wandering and precarious life in the petty conditions of small provincial towns and to try his fortune in Paris, then the musical metropolis of Europe. Having reconciled Minna to his project, his first move was to take lessons in French, a language which he had sadly neglected at school. He engaged a Frenchman, and under his supervision made a translation of the text of Rienzi, which he thought would be useful to him in Paris. In April Minna for the last time in her life appeared several times on the stage in leading parts, such as *Preciosa*, Schiller's *Maria Stuart*, etc.; but the season was drawing to a close and she attracted very little attention. The difficulty was now to obtain the means for his long journey, and to escape from his creditors, who were certain to beset him when his intentions became known. For the first the sale of his few household effects would barely suffice; for his escape from Russian territory the aid of his Königsberg friend Abraham Möller, who happened to be in Riga on a visit at the time, was called in. To forestall opposition it was arranged that he should leave two months before the expiration of his contract. Dorn, with the friendly purpose, as we may believe, of facilitating his departure and at the same time providing him with some available cash, agreed to carry on his duties, while Wagner received in advance the salary due for that period. At the end of May the company migrated for a month to the neighbouring town of Mitau, and it was decided that Wagner should leave with his wife on the day of its return to Riga. The difficulties were very great; to obtain a passport was out of the question, because of the creditors, and any attempt to cross the boundary without one was very dangerous, the frontier being guarded by Cossack pickets at intervals of about 1,000 yards, who had orders to fire upon any person who tried to cross the line. They had brought all their transportable belongings, bed and table linen, household utensils, lamps, etc., besides a large Newfoundland dog named "Robber,"

who had attached himself to Wagner in Riga, and was so distressed at being left behind that he had been sent on to Mitau.

On June 26th, having on the evening before conducted Weber's *Oberon*, he started with his party on their perilous and eventful journey. Möller was in communication with a friend on the frontier; with his aid they were conducted to a point near the line where they waited till after sunset. Means had been contrived for the sentry to be away on his patrol at the moment of their passing. They crossed the trench in safety and were received on the Prussian side by Möller, who took them on to the little port of Pillau. Wagner now found himself with about 100 ducats in his pocket to pay for the journey to Paris of himself and his wife with all their encumbrances. Möller had accompanied them as far as Pillau and made arrangements for such comfort as was possible under the conditions. There was a delay of several days before the ship—the *Thetis*, a wretched little coaster with a crew of seven men—could be got ready for the voyage to London, which was to be their first stage. Not being provided with passports the party had to go on board by stealth and hold themselves in hiding whilst the controlling officers were on board. On about the 18th of July they set sail. It is not necessary to recount all the miseries which they had to suffer on the voyage, cooped up in the captain's cabin with no proper berths to lie upon, and with continued heavy weather. In spite of sea-sickness and terror Wagner found opportunity to hear from the sailors the authentic story of Van der Decken, the Flying Dutchman, and mentally noted the characteristic sounds of board-ship life, the hauling of ropes, weighing the anchor, etc., which he was to turn to such excellent account at a later time. They touched at Copenhagen and also at a little place called Sandvik in the Skager Rack on the Norwegian coast, which he afterwards immortalised in his *Fliegender Holländer*. On leaving the latter place the ship struck a rock and had to put in to Tromsond for repairs. Thence they again set sail on August 1st and made for the English coast, beating against an adverse

wind, which rose at last to a tremendous gale. The afternoon of the 7th was the worst, and they prepared for shipwreck, Minna tying herself to her husband that they might both be drowned together. On the following day the wind abated, but they had been driven from their course, the captain was out in his reckonings, and the sky being overcast was unable to find their position by observations. Another ship whose guidance they followed for a time ran ashore on a shoal off the Dutch coast. On the 9th they made the coast of Suffolk in the neighbourhood of Southwold, and were soon boarded by a pilot ; the sight of the weather-beaten face of a real English sailor was, Wagner says, an inexpressible relief to them. Under his protection they were brought past the sandbanks of the English coast and up the Thames to Gravesend, where they were transhipped for London Bridge and landed on the 12th, having spent twenty-six days on the voyage from Pillau.

In London they found lodgings at a boarding-house in Old Compton Street, where a week's rest was deemed necessary to enable them to recover from their exhaustion. Wagner determined to use the opportunity in forming connections in the great city. He had some time before written to Sir George Smart, the friend of Beethoven and Weber, and at the time Director of the Philharmonic Society's concerts, but had received no answer ; he now tried to find him, but learned that he was absent from London. His next thought was to call upon Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton to discuss with him the dramatisation of *Rienzi*. Having learned that he was a Member of Parliament, Wagner went with his wife to the House of Commons to find him. He knew a few words of English from his reading of Shakespeare when a boy, but they were not sufficient to serve him, and the attendants not understanding what he wanted sent him from one office to another. At last he was ushered into the presence of a very distinguished looking personage who spoke French, treated him with great courtesy and seemed much impressed when he asked for Bulwer Lytton, but could not help him. Wagner then asked for permission to attend a sitting of the house, but was politely

informed that the space was very limited and no place was at that time available. The House of Lords was, however, then sitting, and the official allowed him to have a peep at the assembled peers through an open door, pointing out to him the Duke of Wellington, Lords Melbourne, Brougham, Lyndhurst and the Bishop of London; the last, he says, impressed him less favourably than the others. The empty room of the House of Commons was also shown to them. On August 20th they left London for Boulogne-sur-Mer.

CHAPTER V

PARIS

We can imagine the feelings with which Wagner learned on reaching Boulogne that among the visitors to that fashionable watering-place was Giacomo Meyerbeer. He decided to remain there for a time and finish the scoring of the completed portion of *Rienzi* before proceeding to Paris. He rented for himself and his wife a little room about two miles out, with the scantiest of furniture, where they remained, he working while she cooked the meals on the stove. He lost no time in calling upon Meyerbeer, who received him with the affability usual to him, promised him support in Paris and letters of introduction to the leaders of the musical world; he also introduced him to Moscheles and to another famous musician, a Mdlle. Blahetka, who were then in Boulogne, and with whom he had the opportunity of hearing some excellent music. He read to Meyerbeer the text of his *Rienzi* and left a portion of the score with him. The scoring of the second act was soon completed, and on September 16th he took the *diligence* to Paris, where he arrived early in the morning. The first quarters which he and Minna occupied were in a back street, the *Rue de la Tonnellerie*, a turning out of the *Rue St. Honoré*, in a house claiming to be the birthplace of Molière, since demolished. All arrangements had been made for him by Avenarius, who at the time was engaged to, and very soon afterwards married, Wagner's half-sister Cäcilie. Avenarius was a member of the Brockhaus firm, 60 Rue Richelieu. Friedrich Brockhaus, the head of the firm, also Wagner's brother-in-law, soon afterwards himself came to Paris with his wife for a short visit.

Meyerbeer provided him with letters of recommendation to Duponchel, the Director of the Opera, to Habeneck, the

famous conductor, to the publisher Schlesinger,[1] and to his own friend and general agent Gouin, described by Blaze de Bury as "la pensée du maître incarnée," and to others. He was received with the affability which the Parisian knows so well how to show to a newly-arrived stranger. Habeneck had his "Columbus" Overture, the only one of his musical compositions which he had at hand, performed at a rehearsal by his orchestra, and Schlesinger the publisher promised to find employment for him. From calling on Scribe he was dissuaded by his friends. Shortly after Meyerbeer himself returned to town and added his personal recommendations. Wagner was full of hope, but there was little result; the prospect of a public performance of any of his larger works seemed as far off as ever. His German biographers have not hesitated to hint at double dealing on the part of Meyerbeer, and have insinuated that his open letters of recommendation were followed by other private ones in an opposite sense. There is not an iota of evidence for such an accusation, which ought never to have been made. Meyerbeer's conduct towards Wagner during his stay in Paris was straightforward and generous, and was of the greatest service to him. A much simpler and more credible view is that Wagner, coming from rather boorish society in Northern Germany, was dazzled by the affability and polish of Parisian gentlemen, and mistook for promises what were mere expressions of ordinary courtesy towards a foreigner. Wagner himself is innocent of having encouraged these calumnies.

The years spent in Paris—from September, 1839, to April, 1842—were of the greatest importance for Wagner's development, but there are few incidents to relate. It was the time of trial by fire, the fire of adversity, in which the weakling succumbs, but from which the young couple emerged chastened and purified, partially freed from the baser elements with which the true metal had hitherto been too much contaminated. The ordeal was a cruel one. Till now, however unsympathetic

[1] Moritz Adolf Schlesinger, the founder of the Paris house in 1834.

his surroundings, he had been sustained by the consciousness of the powers within him and the stimulus of active work, and he could console himself for present failures by the thought of better days to come; but in Paris it seemed as if all hope must be abandoned. Never had he suffered such abject poverty. Meyerbeer found him employment just sufficient to keep him from actual starvation and gave him introductions. To insist, as the blind worshippers of Wagner's genius have done, that Meyerbeer should have exerted the unbounded influence which he undoubtedly possessed to push the works of the young musician who had come to him as a total stranger without any reputation or without any prospect of a sudden and brilliant success is to show total ignorance of the conditions of an artist's life. Then, as now, there were countless young and talented musicians who had as rightful a claim upon his interest as had Wagner. Even Meyerbeer, powerful as he was, could not command a performance, let us say, of *Das Liebesverbot* at the *Théâtre de la Renaissance;* had he attempted to do so he would have courted disaster. The suggestion that he was influenced by jealousy of a young and talented rival composer is too ridiculous to need refutation. Wagner himself in after years, though bitterly opposed to Meyerbeer on artistic grounds, always acknowledged the help which he had received from him during the Paris years.[1]

It was not long before Wagner made through Avenarius the acquaintance of several resident Germans to whom he became warmly attached, and who formed almost his only intimate society in Paris. Foremost among these was a person who passed under the name of *Anders*. He came of a noble and once wealthy family from Bonn on the Rhine, and owing to financial losses had come to Paris to earn a livelihood. There is a certain mystery about this personage; his history and his real name have never been divulged; we only know that he called himself Anders—"Otherwise." He was considerably older than the Wagners, being over fifty, and was a born

[1] See his letter to Schumann of December 29th, 1840; also one to his mother of September 12th, 1841.

bibliophile. From the ruin of his family he had saved a large collection of books, and his knowledge, especially of musical bibliography, was profound. He had been a pupil of Forkel, and was employed in the musical department of the Bibliothèque Royale, eking out his miserable salary of £60 a year by contributions to the *Gazette musicale* and other literary work. With Anders lived his friend *Samuel Lehrs*, who like himself had been brought up in wealth and luxury and had come to Paris with broken fortunes. Lehrs was of Israelitish extraction, and was born in 1806 in Königsberg, where his brother was at this time Professor of Philology at the University. Samuel Lehrs was himself a classical scholar of very high attainments, and was employed in Paris by the publishing firm F. A. Didot to edit the text of a series of Greek authors for a scanty remuneration. The two friends were almost daily visitors in Wagner's rooms. The companions in poverty were far from giving way to dejection; Wagner's spirits were unquenchable, and his beautiful wife shed sunshine over the circle. It was here that Minna shone at her best. Wagner, in later times, never tires of praising the fortitude with which she endured all privations, and the astonishing skill which she showed in the management of the domestic household, eking out their scanty supplies when it was often doubtful where the next meal would come from.

Another German who soon afterwards joined their circle was *Ernst Kietz*, an artist from Dresden, "an extraordinarily true-hearted, good-natured child of nature," who had formerly had some acquaintance with the Geyer family, and had actually met Richard Wagner in company without being introduced to him. Kietz had come to Paris to study oil-painting in the atelier of Delaroche, and although enjoying a certain reputation as an artist in crayons was as impecunious as the rest of the company. *Ferdinand Pecht*[1] was a friend of Kietz and his fellow-student at the atelier. He has published some interesting and sympathetic reminiscences of Wagner during

[1] Pecht, *Aus Wagners Pariser Zeit.* (Beil. z. Münchener Allg. Ztng, 1883, No. 81) *Lebenserinnerungen* (München, 1894).

this epoch, and dwells upon the refinement and elegance of his appearance. Wagner's features he says at that time showed none of the harshness of his later years, but were delicate, even soft; withal there was a mysterious air of something unapproachable about the man.

Wagner describes his first experiences in Paris thus:

> I made every effort to become known in the world-city, but lacked all the personal qualifications that were necessary. I learned French just sufficiently for ordinary requirements, but was instinctively repelled by the language, and felt not the slightest inclination to acquire French ways. I flattered myself with the hope of being able to reach the public in my own way, and trusted to music, the language of all the world, to bridge over the cleft which, as I could not help feeling, separated me from my Parisian audience. On the rare occasions when I attended the brilliant performances of the *Grand-Opéra* there came over me a delicious glow, warming me to the wish, the hope, and at last the certainty of triumph.

Far more decisive than the opera were the impressions which he received from the concert-room performances under Habeneck. Hitherto his conception of Beethoven's symphonies had been gained from the careless and desultory performances at the Leipzig Gewandhaus under the nerveless Pohlenz. Habeneck was a musician of very different calibre. He had bestowed almost incredible pains upon the preparation for performance of the Ninth Symphony. Finding at first that it met with no response from his orchestra, he had rehearsed it again and again during three entire seasons until each passage had become clear to the intelligence of every member of his band, and they were able to render it with a precision, a fire, a delicacy of phrasing and interpretation unknown to any other orchestra in the world. The scales fell from Wagner's eyes when he heard the glorious work as it was rendered by that orchestra;[1] "ashamed and penitent," he retracted his errors; from that day forward he understood German music as he had

[1] According to Glasenapp he only heard the instrumental part. In after years he spoke somewhat slightingly of the choral finale.

never understood it before, and could write of Beethoven's symphonies as "the greatest achievement of the art of any nation at any epoch."

In their utter destitution the young couple had pawned every article of any value which they possessed, ending with their wedding rings. Abraham Möller had told them before leaving Riga that if the worst came to the worst they should apply to him for funds; they now did so, but received no answer. Years afterwards they met him again in Dresden and learned the truth. Kind friends had slandered Wagner in his absence; Möller had weakly listened to them, and had determined to withdraw his assistance. Once more Wagner appealed to Meyerbeer; through the instrumentality of Gouin he was introduced to Antenor Joly, Director of the *Théâtre de la Renaissance*, who promised him a performance of *Das Liebesverbot* and made preparations for putting it into rehearsal. In order to be near his work he moved his home from the squalid quarter of the *Innocents* to rooms in the fourth story of a house in the *Rue du Helder*, close to the opera-house. For a time there seemed some prospect of a success. A certain Dumersan, stage-manager at the *Théâtre des Variétés*, was engaged to write the French version of the libretto. After the usual long delays he was prevailed upon to listen to the music of some numbers which Wagner played to him. Then he was full of enthusiasm, and used all his influence to make propaganda for the work. When Joly seemed inclined to go back upon his promise on the pretext that the music was by a German and unsuited to the Parisian taste it was Dumersan who made him persevere. All seemed to promise well, when suddenly the bankruptcy of Joly's theatre was announced and Wagner's hopes were dashed to the ground. After this last catastrophe Dumersan commissioned him to compose the music to a vulgar Vaudeville for the *Variétés*. He seems to have composed some numbers, but the *personnel* rebelled against it as too difficult, and only one chorus was sung. I have in the preceding more than once had to point out that many of Wagner's misfortunes were at least in part the result of his

own follies, but it is impossible not to be impressed with the persistent ill-luck which pursued him both in Germany and in Paris. It must, however, be admitted that Wagner had grievously mistaken his French public. He knew little of the world; his cardinal error was in thinking that frivolity in itself was enough to carry its way in France. Everyone who has been in contact with French people knows that however much they may appear to the foreigner to care only for light pleasures there lies behind the outer garment of gaiety and frivolity a remarkable intelligence and refined sensibility to the beautiful, an exquisite sense for grace, *esprit*, sweetness, as well as for artistic form, and that unless a work has these qualities it will assuredly fail. In fact, Wagner, both here and later in England, made the mistake usual with Germans, that of judging the whole people by the ignorant and vulgar classes, high and low, instead of by the intellectual and cultured.

The prospect of actual starvation for himself and his wife was very real at this time. Of the depths of his poverty we can form some idea from the story which he relates of the return of the MS. of his "Rule Britannia" Overture from the Philharmonic Society of London, to whom he had sent it with a view to performance. There were seven francs to pay on the parcel; as he had not the wherewithal to pay the postman took it away, and the Overture was lost.[1] His wealthy brother-in-law, Friedrich Brockhaus, was ready to help him—as he helped other members of the family—but only under the impossible condition that he would change his mode of life, *i.e.* renounce his artistic schemes and settle down as a sober and industrious man of business. The publisher Schlesinger provided him with some musical hack-work for a small remuneration. First he was commissioned to compile a "School for the Cornet-à-Piston," an instrument of which he knew nothing, out of five other "Schools" which were sent to him. When this came to nothing he was set to arrange operas of Donizetti, Halévy and other fashionable composers

[1] It reappeared in 1904 among some old papers sold as rubbish in England from a workhouse.

for the piano with flute or cornet-à-piston, or for the piano alone. This miserable labour brought him in little enough, but it was something, and to refresh himself he composed an overture to Goethe's *Faust*, intending it to form the first movement of a symphony. The other movements were never composed, but the overture in a later revised form is still performed, and is the only one of his early instrumental compositions which has survived. He also earned a little money by literary work, mostly for Schlesinger's *Gazette Musicale*, for which his contributions were written in German and translated into French. Others appeared in German papers. Some of the articles and stories have been republished in his collected works, but have been too little noticed. They are, regarded as literature, among the best productions of his pen. It is easy for those who have never known starvation to condemn the series of sketches entitled *Ein deutscher Musiker in Paris* as extravagant and rhapsodical; they are wrung from his very heart, and as a picture of certain phases of Parisian life they are absolutely truthful, for they are his own experiences. Moreover, they are profoundly sincere, not the outcome of passing moods, or of vexation at his own want of success. It is impossible to understand Wagner's psychology without realising that his entire life was one ceaseless struggle against the institutions of society, its falsehood, its selfishness, its frivolity, combined with a love tender and passionate for human beings as such.

After the failure of the Renaissance theatre the singers, who had rehearsed their parts up to a certain point, were asked to give a private performance of selections from the opera. Wagner was fortunate enough to secure the presence of some of the leaders of music in Paris, amongst them of Edouard Monnais, the new Director of the Opéra, and of Eugène Scribe, for Wagner had at last summoned sufficient resolution to call upon him and present his invitation in person. He himself accompanied on the piano. The performance was a decided success; the music was pronounced "charmant," Scribe even offering to write a libretto for him if the Director would promise

a performance. Again nothing resulted; indeed, by this time Wagner had learned to know his patrons too well to build any hopes on their polite speeches.

Rienzi had been put aside for a time, and Wagner occupied himself with the composition of songs of a lighter character, more suited, as he thought, to the French taste, a French translation of Heine's *Die beiden Grenadiere*, and three romances by Victor Hugo. But, in spite of the "Marseillaise" with which he, as did Schumann independently, concluded the first of these, they had no success; they were judged too strange and too difficult for general acceptance. It was probably at this time that he made a complete translation of *Das Liebesverbot* into French, doubtless as an exercise in learning the language.

Ferdinand Pecht, writing more than forty years later, has given us an account of Wagner's personality at this time which is too interesting to be omitted. I give some extracts:

> I was attracted by the irresistible charm of his company, and soon became friendly with him. I was a frequent visitor in the little lodging which he had rented and furnished—of course, on credit—in the fourth story of a house in the *Rue du Helder*. Though only twenty-six, he showed an astuteness and a resourcefulness such as I have never met with in any other person, coupled with a magical power of fascination and an innate nobility of nature such that with all his passionateness and his sparkling wit he never became trivial or vulgar. I could not but admire the inexhaustible capacity and strength of will of the man whom nc distress could discourage for more than a moment, whose confidence in his talent no disaster could vanquish. . . . We were all as poor as church mice; we could console him with the consciousness that he was not absolutely forsaken, that there were some who believed in him, of whose small circle he remained the undisputed centre. We were all his pupils, and felt clearly how he towered above us. In spite of the misery in which he lived and of the utter hopelessness of his prospects, the elasticity with which he could at our evening meetings raise himself above the troubles of the moment fills me even now with astonishment. He entertained us with endless whimsicalities, characterising one after the other all the great musicians. [The reader of his essays will be reminded of his sketches of Duponchel with his eye-glass, of Scribe in his dressing-gown sipping chocolate amid a circle of courtier

clients and many more.] . . . His familiarity with the musical productions of all times was in so young a man almost inconceivable. He knew the early Italians, Palestrina, Pergolese, etc., as accurately as he knew the older Germans. It was from him that I gained my first knowledge of Sebastian Bach. Gluck, even then, occupied him continually; Haydn's nature-painting, Mozart's genius and the wretched circumstances of his position in Vienna and Salzburg; the peculiarities of the French, of Lully, Boieldieu, Auber; Weber's wonderful manner, redolent of the people, with the figure of Beethoven towering over all; Mendelssohn's elegant drawing-room music—all these he described to us, singing scraps of melodies, with an animation, a plastic force that dwell to this day in my recollection.

By a strange piece of fortune it happened that his old friend Heinrich Laube was then in Paris, and soon after Wagner's arrival to their mutual surprise and joy they met. Laube's circumstances were now very different from what they had been when last they met in Berlin. He had served his term of one year's imprisonment, which had been made as light as possible for him in the Silesian fortress of Muskau. Before it began he had married a wealthy and highly intellectual widow, who had followed him to his place of confinement, and they were now temporarily residing in Paris, living very happily together in comfortable circumstances in a fashionable part of the city. Laube was not only keenly sympathetic and encouraging with regard to Wagner's plans in Paris, but on returning to Germany soon afterwards exerted his interest in his behalf, and obtained from a wealthy Leipzig Jew and from a rich relation — presumably Brockhaus—a monthly allowance for six months, sufficient to enable him to live. At Laube's house he met with Heinrich Heine the poet, who had cast the dust of Germany from his feet and settled in Paris. He was much struck with Wagner, and with characteristic malicious wit said the worst thing that he knew about him was that he was a protégé of Meyerbeer. Among the musical acquaintances which he made at Paris were Halévy, Berlioz and Vieuxtemps. For Halévy's *La Juive* he had always had a fondness. For Berlioz he seems to have felt a sort of holy

awe, and acknowledges that he feels very small, like a schoolboy, beside him; but though fully alive to his genius, he found Berlioz's work too strange and too unequal to win his entire approval. Vieuxtemps he had met before in Riga, and warmly admired his playing. Vieuxtemps had some acquaintance with Wagner's friend Kietz, and while in Paris spent an evening with the Wagners, giving them some music.

Rienzi, which had been in abeyance for some time, was again taken in hand and completed on November 19th, 1840. From the first he had destined it for Dresden, and the part of the hero was expressly designed for Tichatschek, whose magnificent voice was then in its prime.[1] He reckoned upon the interest of Madame Schröder-Devrient, who had exerted herself on behalf of *Die Feen*, for getting it accepted, as well as of other friends in the Saxon capital. To all of them he wrote personally, and also officially to von Lüttichau, the Intendant of the Court Opera-House. Finally, he addressed a humble petition to the King of Saxony, recommending the work to his favour. A little later Meyerbeer wrote to Dresden in its behalf.[2] In October Wagner made his first acquaintance with Franz Liszt, who was in Paris on a visit. They first met and were introduced to each other in Schlesinger's office, and Liszt had heard of him in Germany through Laube. Liszt gave some private rehearsals in the *Salle Erard*, and afterwards Wagner called upon him at his residence and was received. It is quite intelligible under the circumstances, when he could not possibly have gained any intimate knowledge of the great pianist, that, much as he admired him as a virtuoso, he was rather repelled by his personality.

Wagner's relations with Schlesinger were on a purely business footing. The publisher found him useful in making

[1] Tichatschek, the prince of Wagner tenors, was still occasionally singing in Dresden in 1868. His voice was then little more than a wreck, but the impression of his personality was ineffaceable, only equalled by that of Niemann.

[2] His letter is given verbatim by Prölss.

the arrangements for which he had an enormous sale in Paris, and paid for the work at the minimum market rate for sweated labour. Wagner was told to make fourteen "suites" for the cornet out of motives from favourite operas, of which a pile of sixty were sent him from which to select material, but Schlesinger would venture nothing to afford scope for his higher abilities. Wagner's first articles in the *Gazette Musicale* were a decided success; finding that they attracted attention, Schlesinger offered to include one of his compositions in the next concert organised by the firm. As the orchestra was a very poor one and he was not permitted to conduct himself he selected his early "Columbus" Overture, a work which depended mainly for its effect upon the ensemble of six trumpets. Only four were available, and these not of the best; at the performance on February 4th they broke at every high passage. The piece failed entirely. Schlesinger had purchased the publication rights of Donizetti's *La Favorite*, which had just been produced in Paris, and engaged Wagner to arrange (1) a vocal score; (2) an arrangement for the piano; (3) the same for four hands; (4) the same for quartet; (5) the same for two violins; (6) the same for cornet-à-piston. For all this he was to receive 1,100 francs (£44), of which 500 were paid at once in advance. The money was welcome, but the amount of labour exacted in return was stupendous. Wagner describes their manner of living. They had let one of their rooms to a poor student named Brix, and to save firing lived in their bedroom. In the morning, on rising, he went two steps to his writing-table and immediately settled down to work. He never left the chair till he went to bed in the evening; when Minna served the meals he turned it round to the dining-table. Every four days he went for a short walk to refresh himself. Minna with her own hand did the room, cooked the meals, washed up, and blacked the boots for themselves and their lodger.

By degrees, as he became more familiar with Parisian life, and especially through his intercourse with the German scholar Lehrs, his infatuation with the Grand-Opéra—or to give

it its proper name, *l'Académie royale de Musique*—and with the conditions of society and art in France began to diminish. Even his faith in Meyerbeer was waning; when he looked beneath the splendid outer garment of instrumentation and scenic decoration he found very little that could engage his interest. At that time Meyerbeer, in the general estimation, towered above every other composer for the stage; his operas made the fortune of every theatre that had the means of performing them. It has been asserted that he kept a bureau in every important town in Europe, but that only means that he employed advertising agents who used modern "scientific" methods. A later generation has judged his art with perhaps undue severity; few musicians would speak a word in his favour at the present day. In one sense *Les Huguenots* is as perfect as a work of art can possibly be; in what is generally held to be the first and sole essential, the right adaptation of the means to the end in view, it is unsurpassable. It expresses exactly what it sets out to express. Often, too, the melody is of a very high order, and Meyerbeer's mastery of the technique of composition was consummate, having been acquired since his childhood by hard and systematic study under the best instructors. Moreover, he was a man of wide literary culture, and especially a close student of history. It is not the art, not the expression, but the thing expressed, the tawdry, blatant, self-assertion of the Court of the later Valois Kings, the atmosphere of base political intrigue and savage theological hatred, so faithfully reproduced in the music, which makes *Les Huguenots* intolerable. And so with his other operas; his taste was vulgar, and he prostituted his great talent, not for money, which he did not need, but for power and popular favour. The unapproachable excellence of the genuine German composers lies in their never having followed base ideals—think only of such far less pretentious works as *Fidelio*, *Der Freischütz*, *Die Zauberflöte*, and compare with Meyerbeer's operas! Wagner was already making efforts to return to the Germany which he had deserted. He had sent his *Rienzi* to Dresden, and he sought a connection with

Hofrath Winkler,[1] who had been godfather to his sister Cäcilie, and now held a high post at the Dresden Opera-House. He edited a paper called *Die Abendzeitung*. Wagner helped to bolster up the moribund journal by writing Paris gossip, or little articles, two of which, on *Le Freischütz* (not then published) and on Halévy's *La Reine de Chypre*, he thought worthy of preservation in his collected works. Another friend, August Lewald, lived in Stuttgart, where he edited a paper called *Europa*. Wagner sent him some songs and contributed two articles on Paris life to his paper under the pseudonym, "W. Freudenfeuer." Another effort which he made to approach Liszt met with no success.

Early in 1841 Anders proposed to Wagner that they should write and publish as their joint work a biography of Beethoven in two volumes. The only biographies which then existed were the loose and unsatisfactory one of Schindler, and some sketchy memoirs, such as those of Ries and Wegeler or of Ignaz von Seyfried. Anders, a devoted worshipper of the master, had collected a vast amount of biographical material, and he proposed to place this at Wagner's disposal. Wagner took up the project enthusiastically, and endeavoured to interest his German friends Winkler, Lewald and Laube. Unhappily the project came to nothing; such a work would have been a priceless addition to our literature of musical biography.

In the summer of 1841 the Wagners were able to let their little lodging in Paris and spend six months in Meudon, a suburb of the city a few miles out, taking with them their lodger Brix. Here, relieved of the distractions of city life, Wagner was able to settle down to steady work. He had already (in May, 1840) made the sketch of a small opera based on Heine's version of the old story of Van der Decken, the Flying Dutchman. Heine had added to the original story a very essential feature, the possibility of salvation for the Dutchman through the love of a woman "true till death," and Wagner had adopted the innovation. Originally the opera was in one

[1] See Chapter I., p. 25.

act; the scene was laid on the coast of Scotland and the names were Scotch—Donald (Daland), Georg (Erik). The sketch had at Meyerbeer's instance been given to the Director of the Opera, Léon Pillet, on the understanding that Wagner should write the words and compose the music. For long nothing was heard about it. Now, in Meyerbeer's absence from Paris, in the summer of 1841, it came to light that Pillet had given the sketch to a popular playwright of Paris, one Paul Foucher, a brother-in-law of Victor Hugo, to versify.[1] Wagner complained bitterly of his property being disposed of without his being consulted, and 500 francs were offered him as compensation; with this he had to be content, but he set to work to compose the opera himself. It was written in short score in seven weeks.

In Meudon he enjoyed the advantage of change of scene to a more rural life, or to what has to pass for such with the dweller in Paris. Avenarius and his wife were also there for a time and had taken lodgings close to the Wagners; they saw much of each other, and a cordial friendship sprang up between the two families. Wagner, out of delicacy, since they were not in a position to help him, was careful not to let his sister notice the straits in which they were living, and she and her husband were completely taken in by his high spirits and cheerful manner. So long as the 500 francs which he had received for his opera-sketch lasted they were able to keep the wolf from the door, but when that was exhausted and his Paris rooms were vacated by the sub-tenant, so that even that little source of income failed, they were again face to face with starvation. Wagner tells how one morning he started off to Paris to try if he could somehow raise five francs for a meal. He returned in the evening empty-handed, only to learn that Minna had given the last crust of bread away to a starving friend. On that evening Minna contrived by some means unknown to procure food for themselves and their lodger Brix, who, being dependent upon them, was also starving. Lehrs, living

[1] The music was composed by Louis Dietsch, and the opera produced on November 9th, 1842. It had no success.

under similar conditions, was actually dying of his privations. He continued his work of editing Greek texts for a miserable remuneration, and from the incessant labour in an unheated room he had fallen into a decline, under which he was slowly sinking. One morning there arrived a letter from the French Minister of the Interior stating that it had come to the knowledge of the Government that a distinguished foreign scholar, engaged on work that brought honour to the French nation, was living in straitened circumstances, and enclosing a cheque for five hundred francs from the year's budget grant for literature, which he was asked to accept as a token of appreciation from the French people. This furnished him with the means of obtaining coals and food; but it came too late, and he died in April, 1843.

I will spare myself and my readers further details of this terrible time; they are all told in Wagner's *Autobiography*, where also may be read touching instances of self-sacrificing generosity on the part of friends as poor as himself. But hope was already beginning to dawn. In July, while he was living in Meudon, there arrived a letter from von Lüttichau, the Dresden Intendant, informing him that his opera *Rienzi* had been accepted for performance, and would, it was hoped, be given in the course of the coming winter. For the present this was only a distant gleam, and the problem was how to live during the next months. On October 30th they returned to Paris and took lodgings at 14 *Rue Jacob*. The instrumentation of the *Holländer* was now finished, and the overture was written in Paris; he immediately took steps to have it performed at one of the larger German opera-houses. After it had been refused at Munich and Leipzig as "unsuited for performance in Germany" he applied to Berlin, where Meyerbeer at this period spent most of his time, only visiting Paris at intervals. Having despatched the score to Graf Redern, the Intendant of the Opera and a personal friend of Meyerbeer, and also written to Meyerbeer himself, he resumed his slavery in Paris. Halévy's opera *La Reine de Chypre* then held the public favour, and Wagner was set to do the arrangements.

This brought him into closer contact with the composer, whose modest, unassuming good nature attracted him strongly, and he was able to act as mediator between the indolent and indifferent composer, who, content with having made a great name, was just about to marry a rich wife, and the impatient publisher.

As the year drew to a close there was still no news from Dresden. Wagner was in correspondence with the Director of the Choruses, Fischer, and with Ferdinand Heine, an old friend of his family, then in charge of the costumes. The difficulties of mounting *Rienzi* for the stage were found to be very great. No less than 537 new costumes had to be ordered for the opera. The prospect of a performance that winter diminished as the season advanced, but the preparations, especially the rehearsals of the choruses under Heine, went on steadily. From Berlin there was no news at all; his letters remained unanswered. With the impatience natural to a young composer Wagner forgot that great institutions will not be hurried, and on March 2nd he induced his brother-in-law Avenarius to ask a Berlin friend to call personally upon Meyerbeer and find out if the score had been received. This move seems to have been successful, for on March 14th Graf Redern wrote to Wagner definitely accepting the opera for performance.

Wagner had long wished to return to Germany. Not only had everything which he had seen of the artistic life of Paris filled him with disgust and aversion, but he was home-sick and longed for his friends and the familiar scenes of his youth. Although this feeling was quite independent of political ideals, in which he had little interest, it nevertheless kindled in him a certain sense of patriotism and impelled him to study the early history of the German people. All his life a great and attentive reader, he now occupied himself with Räumer's *History of the Hohenstaufen*,[1] and was especially attracted by the figure of the Emperor Friedrich II. He endeavoured to

[1] First published in 1823–25 in six volumes.

construct a tragedy out of the life of that extraordinary and versatile Crusader, but failed to bring it into dramatic form, and turned to Friedrich's son, Manfred. Round the historical events of his life Wagner sketched the plot of a drama, *Die Sarazenin*, which again turned upon the love of a woman, this time of a sister for her brother. It is significant that he failed to satisfy himself in the more purely historical drama, *Friedrich*, and that although the framework of the one which he next attempted was historical the story was in all its essential features fiction. This, too, was put aside. As the Meyerbeer influence waned his artistic mind turned away from history. For the present the change was instinctive and unconscious, but it soon ripened into a deliberate principle.

The next subject which occupied him was more fruitful. There fell into his hands a volume which he describes as a "Volksbuch," containing the essentially German story of Tannhäuser. In all probability the book was the *Deutsche Sagen* of the brothers Grimm.[1] He, of course, knew the story, which is familiar to every child in Germany, and he had read of Tannhäuser in Hoffmann and Tieck, but the version in Grimm's beautiful and simple German appealed to him as no other had done, and he at once saw its dramatic possibilities. At the same time he read in a book lent to him by Lehrs an account of the Lohengrin poem.

The promised performance of *Rienzi* was now definitely fixed for the autumn of 1842. He felt that his presence in Germany was necessary, and determined at any cost to return. Unexpected help was forthcoming. On December 26th he returned from the house of Avenarius carrying a Christmas dinner and a present to his wife, a goose with a 500-franc note in its beak, obtained for him by his sister Luise Brockhaus from a wealthy merchant named Schletter.[2] On the strength of his operas having been accepted in Dresden and Berlin he

[1] See Golther in *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1899, p. 139 *sqq.*

[2] He deserves more notice than I have been able to give him in the text. He is said to have been the wealthiest merchant in Leipzig, and at one time wished to marry Wagner's sister Rosalie.

thought himself justified in writing once more to his brother-in-law, Friedrich Brockhaus, in Leipzig. The application was successful, and he was now set up in funds for his journey. He bade a sorrowful farewell to his friends, Kietz forcing upon him the last five-franc piece which he possessed. Immediately after Easter, 1842, on April 5th, he left Paris, hoping from the bottom of his heart never to see it again.

CHAPTER VI

WRITINGS OF THE PARIS PERIOD

> Every word that I wrote was a cry of indignation against modern conditions of art. I was assured that it was considered very entertaining.

THE more important of Wagner's writings during his residence in Paris from 1839 to 1842 are republished in the first volume of his collected works. The circumstances under which they were written have been told in the preceding chapter. They are all contributions to French and German periodicals, written at the time of his utmost destitution to eke out the small income which he was able to earn by making arrangements of favourite operas for the great publishing firm of Maurice Schlesinger. Their interest for us lies in the indication which they afford of the tendency of his thought at this period; we see how his mind was already occupied with the germs of ideas which he treated more fully and more adequately in his later writings. In addition to the few which he considered worthy of inclusion when his collected writings were published in 1871 there are many others, some of which have been printed in the later editions. All the French articles were produced in the *Gazette Musicale*, the journal of Schlesinger, edited by Edouard Monnais, who was also Director-General of the Royal Operas, and had to be translated into French before publication, which robbed him of a good portion of his much-needed remuneration.

"EIN DEUTSCHER MUSIKER IN PARIS."

The series of articles now collected and published under this title first appeared in the *Revue et Gazette musicale* between

November, 1840, and November, 1841. They purport to be sketches found among the papers of a young German musician who had died in Paris. The musician is, of course, Wagner himself, who adopts this method of recounting imaginary or real experiences to convey the thoughts of an artist with lofty ideals and to depict the conditions under which such an one, if without money and without friends, may expect to live in the great capital.

The first sketch is entitled *Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven* (A Pilgrimage to Beethoven). The scene is laid some twenty or more years back, when the master is still living and is just occupied with his Ninth Symphony. The musician, still very young, feeling an irrepressible longing to visit him, journeys to Vienna on foot. On the road he falls in with a wealthy, vulgar, globe-trotting Englishman of the type common in continental caricature of that time, driving in a carriage with the same purpose, who tries to force himself into his company. We can pass over the comical padding, which is merely intended to amuse the Parisian public. He reaches Vienna, and after many shifts to rid himself of the intruding Englishman at last finds himself in a room face to face with the deaf composer, to whom he pours out his heart, telling how he has slaved at musical drudgery, composing galops, etc., that he might come to Vienna on foot to see him. He speaks in glowing terms of *Fidelio*, of which he has just witnessed a performance with "Wilhelmine Schröder" in the title-rôle.[1] Beethoven, touched by his enthusiasm dilates upon the opera :

> "Vexatious work," he replied. "I am not an operatic composer ; at least I know of no theatre in the world for which I would like to write another opera. Were I to compose one to my own fancy the people would run away, for there would be no Arias, Duets, Terzets, or any of the stuff with which they patch up operas nowadays ; what I should make instead of them no singer would sing and no public would listen to. They only know glittering lies, brilliant nonsense, sugared dullness. A man who composed

[1] The earliest great triumph of Dem. Schröder was her creation of the part of "Leonora" at the Vienna opera in 1822, when Beethoven himself was present. She was not then eighteen.

a musical drama would be looked upon as a fool, and rightly, unless he kept it to himself."

"And how," I asked ardently, "would he go to work to create such a musical drama?"

"As Shakespeare did when he wrote his plays."

After explaining that he was not considered a vocal composer because by "vocal" the Viennese understood "operatic" he is reminded by his visitor of his *Adelaide*. Beethoven continues:

> Such things are after all trifles. . . . Why should not vocal music form a *genre* as great and as serious as that of instrumental music? Why should it not be treated by the light-hearted race of singers with the same respect as is the symphony by orchestral players? The human voice is given; it is, in fact, a far nobler and more beautiful organ of sound than any instrument in the orchestra. Could it not be used with the same independence as these? What new results might be gained! The instruments represent the primordial organs of creation and of nature. What they express can never be anything determinate and established, for they express the primary emotions proceeding out of chaos at the first creation, when perhaps there were no men to receive them into their hearts. The genius of the voice is very different; it represents the human heart and its self-contained individual emotions. Its character is consequently limited, but definite and clear.

He goes on, however, to point out the limitations imposed upon music, especially from the unavoidable adjunction of words. Poetry, he says, must take a second place (zurückstehen). Here we see that the problems have not attained perfect clearness in his mind. According to the fully-matured doctrine of his later writings the languages of words and of music will be strictly co-ordinate; each will fulfil its part in the organism of the drama, and neither will be subordinate to the other.

Unfortunately, the essay as a literary composition suffers from a serious weakness due to Wagner's want of experience in writing *feuilleton* articles. The admixture of rather silly comedy, though clever enough in its way, is unworthy of the dignity of the subject and mars the literary impression. No

doubt he intended a contrast between the gloomy and solitary Beethoven and the stupid, self-satisfied Englishman, which might have been very effective if skilfully handled. As it is it fails in its purpose; the Englishman is only irritating.

The second story, *Ein Ende in Paris* (An End in Paris), is a psychological study. The musician has grown to a man: "His inner faith in the divine, incontrovertible truth of his art has become a fanaticism, and has imparted a character of inflexible obstinacy to a disposition naturally peaceful and gentle." It is this "inflexible obstinacy" of faith in an artistic ideal, struggling with the merciless conditions of civic life that forms the subject of the essay. The hero, modest and lovable by nature, gifted, ambitious and hopeful, with a fine confidence in the power of his own abilities to overcome all obstacles, lives in the recollection of having once in his youth visited Beethoven and spoken with him face to face—a circumstance, we are told, which has so completely turned his head that he cannot find himself in the great city. In the end he perishes. At first he will not hear of a doubt that within a year he will be famous, but as the months pass by he finds that no one has noticed him. He spends his days in the ante-chambers of great men, vainly waiting for an audience, and is slowly wasting away. Grown morbid from continued disappointment, want and despair—

> "In these ante-chambers," he says to the friend at his bedside, "I have dreamed away a beautiful year of my life. Many and wonderful things did I dream: fabulous things from the *Arabian Nights*, of men and beasts, gold and dirt; I dreamed of gods and of double-basses, of brilliant snuff-boxes and of prima-donnas, of satin jackets and moon-struck lords, of chorus-girls and five-frank pieces. Amidst them all I heard the plaintive, spectral tone of an oboe, penetrating every nerve of my body, and cutting my heart in two."

He dies with a last confession of faith on his lips:

> "I believe in God, Mozart and Beethoven; likewise in their disciples and apostles. I believe in the Holy Ghost (*Geist*, or mind), and in the truth of art, one and indivisible. . . ."

His friends attend his funeral, among them the Englishman, against whom the narrator seems to have a particular spite, adding "he would have done better to have paid his debts."

In this story, with ideas still crude and undeveloped, Wagner depicts the antagonism of genius and society, which is the key-note of all tragedy, ancient and modern. Achilles, Electra, Lear, all perish through their "inflexible obstinacy." To the uninspired critic who knows no higher law than that of human society this appears like a perverse inability to adapt themselves to the conditions of human existence. But the genius acknowledges no law but that of the divine truth implanted in his heart; he cannot see through the distorting spectacles of social law. He has looked at the sun, and, dazzled by its rays, is unable to view the things immediately around him; he appears perverse and unreasonable and perishes, crushed by the stronger power. The rather morbid, overstrained sentiment of both pieces is to my thinking fully compensated by their truthfulness to the actual conditions.

Both these articles were very favourably received by the readers of the *Gazette Musicale*. Wagner says bitterly, "They were considered very entertaining." Their success induced Schlesinger to include one of Wagner's compositions in his next concert programme.

A Happy Evening.—The musician, who is called R——, is at an open-air concert in the company of a friend. A performance of the E♭ Symphony of Mozart and the A Major Symphony of Beethoven gives rise to some conversation between the two friends. R——, who possesses an exquisitely sensitive ear, and as a rule is painfully exacting with regard to execution, now, to the astonishment of his companion, expresses himself rapturously on the very mediocre rendering which they have just heard.

> "There are moods," he says, "when even the worst performance of one of my favourite works can enchant me. They are, indeed, rare, and they only dominate me when my whole inner being is in happy harmony with my bodily health. Then the smallest stimulus will cause the whole piece to tone within myself in

> such ideal perfection as could not be attained by the best orchestra in the world. In such moods my musical ear, usually so scrupulous, will only feel a slight jar at an overblown oboe or a wrong note in the trumpet . . . and nothing angers me so much as when some smooth-eared idiot with an air of superiority professes to be shocked at the little mishap."

At other times, he says, the execution of the very best virtuoso fails to satisfy him: "this is when I put on my evening dress and go among the perfumed ladies and well-dressed gentlemen to seek the delights which enter through the ear." The conversation then passes on to the two symphonies. In both of them the consciousness of joy in existence is blended with the vision of a higher, super-terrestrial element. With Mozart the language of the heart is wistful longing; with Beethoven it grasps boldly at the Infinite. This leads to a discussion of programme-music. R—— speaks with scorn of those who confuse the language of music with that of words: "Nothing is more insufferable than the insipid pictures and stories which they lay beneath their instrumental works. It betrays a poverty of mind and of feeling when a person can only maintain his interest in a symphony of Beethoven. . . . by means of a story in some novel." His companion does not quite agree with this doctrine, and thinks that to connect the music with some picture or story in the mind is very helpful in bringing it within the range of ordinary intelligences, provided only that each person is allowed to form his own picture or story. He illustrates his view by the Eroica Symphony, inspired by Napoleon. We see that Wagner was at this time occupying himself with the problem without having as yet come to any final conclusion. He found the solution afterwards in the drama.

"Ueber deutsches Musikwesen."

The next essay is on German music, and gives an account of its growth and development. It is intended for the Parisian public, who at that time knew little about any music outside the *Académie Royale*. It is written in a warm, lucid and

natural style, very different from the involved and inflated prose of some of his other writings. On the attitude of different nations to music he says :

> The Italian is a singer, the Frenchman a virtuoso, the German a musician. The German has a special right to the name musician because he loves music for its own sake, not as a means of pleasing or to gain money or celebrity, but because it is a divine and beautiful art, which he worships, and which, while it holds him, is all in all to him. The German is able to write music for himself and his friend, without caring whether it is ever executed before a public or not.

He rightly finds the cradle of German music—in those days—not in the halls of princes nor in the Court opera-houses, but in the domestic circles of the humbler classes :

> Go and listen to them on a winter evening in their small room. There sits a father with his three sons at a round table ; two play violins, a third the viola, the father the violoncello. The piece which you hear them play with such deep and earnest feeling is a quartet composed by the little man who is beating the time. He is the schoolmaster from the neighbouring village, and his quartet is artistic, beautiful and full of feeling. You will be moved to tears, and the music will penetrate to your inmost soul ; you will know what German music is, and what is the German spirit. Here there is no question of winning applause for the performance of brilliant passages ; all is pure and innocent.

But, he continues, put these same people before a large audience in a fine room, they at once become self-conscious and nervous, and try to imitate other arts, which before they only knew by hearsay. The German, he goes on, is an instrumental musician ; he is weak in the production of the voice, and his vocal organ is not so good as that of the more fortunate Italian. Admirable, too, is his short characterisation of the leading composers of Germany, Sebastian Bach, Mozart (" this greatest and divinest genius, who made the first German opera, *Zauberflöte* "), Weber, Spohr, Marschner. He concludes with a kindly word for the Italian and French opera, by which the German opera was killed ; for the " genial frivolity " of

Rossini, with its "luscious, joyous song"; for Boieldieu, "in whose glorious *Jean de Paris* sparkles the liveliness, the intelligence, the wit, the grace of the French," qualities which culminated in Auber's *Muette de Portici*, "a truly national work, the very embodiment of the later history of the French nation."

As yet his feeling to art is undeveloped; he is only partly and vaguely conscious of his aims, but we recognise the germ of the principles which governed his later life: (1) the passionate love of art for its own sake and scorn of public success; and (2) the impulse to communicate his art to a sympathetic friend.

"Der Virtuos und der Künstler."

This is a little treatise written in language as warm as the last, and in a more romantic vein. He begins with a fable:

> In days of yore there was a precious jewel, which brought all gifts and happiness to those who beheld it; but it was buried deep in the earth. There were once highly-favoured men who could discern its radiance through the chaos of columns and palaces which encumbered the earth, and it filled their hearts with unspeakable rapture. Vainly they strove to bring it forth to the view of all mankind. Centuries passed; the tradition of the magical jewel was preserved. Shafts were sunk into the bowels of the earth; mines and passages were laid, intricate subterranean labyrinths, so complex that at last all sense of the right direction was lost. The attempt was then given up; shafts, passages and mines were abandoned and threatened to fall into ruin. Then there came a poor miner from Salzburg; he explored the ancient works, and through a cleft he saw the treasure. For a time the whole world was filled with radiance, and every heart quivered with ineffable rapture; but the joy was transient; the miner vanished and was never seen again. Then there came another miner, from Bonn in the Seven Mountains; he too saw the jewel, but he was blinded by its radiance. Seized with divine frenzy, he plunged into the abyss; the works crashed over his head and buried him in their ruins.

Wagner then passes on to describe a performance of *Don Giovanni* in Paris, speaking with bitter irony of a public which

idolised a Rubini with his trill on high A and B♭, while remaining cold and indifferent to such true artists as Grisi and Lablache. The article emphasises a vital and universal truth in all art, but would appeal more to his contemporaries who knew the singers than it does to us. It is said to have been so mutilated in the translation as to have been unrecognisable.

"Der Künstler und die Oeffentlichkeit."

This is a discussion of the relation of the inspired artist to the public whose favour he is bound to court for the sake of his livelihood.

The little article on Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, written, unlike the others of the series, for Germany, and sent to Schumann for his *Neue Zeitschrift fur Musik*, is still in the Mephistophelian vein. In half banter, half venomous irony it lashes the vanities of Parisian society. It notes the incongruity, not to say irreverence, of a Rossini, with the prima donnas and all the tinsel paraphernalia of the opera, being engaged before a fashionable Parisian audience in adoring the sublime conception of the *Mater dolorosa*. As an example of the trenchant sarcasm of which Wagner was a master the article is entertaining, but it has little permanent value.

"Ueber die Ouvertüre."

The next article, on the Overture, is decidedly the most important of his writings at this period. It is a real contribution to the æsthetics of music in its relation to the drama, and here, for the first time, he follows the method which is so marked a character of his later writings, that of eschewing cheap popular solutions and attacking the problem in its foundations. The article is a critical examination of the *raison d'être* of the Overture, the instrumental introduction to a dramatic action. It is not my purpose here to reproduce the substance of Wagner's writings except in so far as to give the reader who is unacquainted with them a sufficient idea of their contents to induce him to study them at the fountain-

head. Wagner traces the growth of the Overture from the beginning. When the opera was invented (about 1600) the old prologue was replaced by an instrumental prelude with no other purpose than to announce that the play was about to begin; instrumental music was not then sufficiently advanced to do more than that. Even in the earlier part of the eighteenth century it was nothing but an instrumental piece unconnected with the work itself. The creators of the overture were Gluck and Mozart; from them it was taken over by Beethoven, Cherubini, Weber and Spontini. In *Die Vestalin* of the last named it became simply a pot-pourri of themes from the opera, in which form it soon became popular with composers of the French and Italian schools. But in Germany it was treated more seriously, and brought into organic connection with the opera which it introduced. By the light of two unapproachable master-works Wagner illustrates the respective domains of the actual drama and its instrumental preface. The Overture is in a certain sense itself a drama, but only in general terms and broad outlines. In that to *Don Giovanni* we have a light and careless motive in fateful conflict with one of crushing, irresistible weight; thus can music express the emotional quintessence of the action. Similarly the great *Leonore* Overture in C Major foreshadows the solitude and gloom of the dungeon, with the longing for freedom broken by the radiant joy of hope. In neither work is there any attempt to depict actual scenes or actions; the music, through its own proper means and within its own limits, is free to spread its wings according to its own laws, and engages our interest purely as music before the key supplied by the drama is known. This is most discernible in the former of the two pieces named. In the *Leonore* Overture Beethoven has treated the music dramatically:

> In this mighty work Beethoven has given a musical drama apart for itself, suggested by the drama on the stage, not merely a sketch of its main idea. . . . His plan was to concentrate on the one sublime action, which in the stage-play is weakened and impeded by insignificant details, and to re-develop it into an ideal new movement from its own inner impulses.

We can gather his meaning. The overture does not follow all the minor details or the personages of the drama. All these are swept away. Instead of them we have, grouped round the main themes and in psychic relation to them, subsidiary musical motives blended and contrasted with each other and developed on strictly musical lines, in this case into a purely musical drama, that is, one where the *dramatis personæ* are musical motives. A third overture, that to Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide*, is similarly analysed and criticised. There is much more in the essay which I will leave the reader to peruse in the original.

The first performance of Weber's *Freischütz* in Paris on June 7th, 1841, was the occasion for two articles, one, "Der Freischütz," written for the Parisians before the performance, the other, entitled "Le Freischutz," after it was over for Germany. They need not detain us. The first is an appeal in quiet and persuasive language to the French people to put aside their ballets and recitatives and at least to give a hearing to the art of Germany. The second is a pretty severe criticism of the performance, in which his home-sickness is very apparent. The last of the articles included is called "A Report on a New Parisian Opera" (*Bericht uber eine neue Pariser Oper*): it gives an account of Halévy's *Reine de Chypre*, and lays stress on the unsatisfactory libretto. The little essays which he did not consider worth preserving in his collected works, but which have now been included in the twelfth volume of the posthumous fifth edition, need not be discussed. They are lively newspaper articles treating of the current events of the day, and have no permanent value, but they exhibit very strikingly the extraordinary fluency of his pen. The ironical banter which he directs against Parisian life is very characteristic. The vein of acrid and rather shallow buffoonery in some of these early pot-boilers is in curious contrast to the profound earnestness of most of his later writings.

CHAPTER VII

DRESDEN—FIRST PERIOD

WAGNER'S stay in Paris brought into prominence one trait of his character which was conspicuous throughout his life, namely his extraordinary capacity for making and retaining friendships. His affection for Anders, Lehrs, Kietz and for his brother-in-law Avenarius was as warm as it was pure, and his grief at parting with them for the moment almost outweighed his joy at returning to his own country. His long absence from home had inclined him somewhat to over-rate the blessings of life in the Fatherland; as for Minna, her heart was entirely in Paris. Whatever his delusions about Germany they were soon dispelled. They crossed the frontier on a raw snowy day in depressing contrast to the warm spring weather which they had left behind, Minna weeping all the way. The view of the Wartburg at Eisenach cheered them to some extent, and thus "fortified against Jews and the Leipzig fair" they continued their journey, reaching Dresden on April 12th. After paying official visits to the theatrical magnates and settling his wife in a small lodging he travelled to Leipzig to visit his mother, whom he had not seen since the death of her daughter Rosalie. She was much changed, but living in tolerable circumstances through the help of her son-in-law, Friedrich Brockhaus. Thence he went to Berlin, intending to interview the *Intendant*, Graf von Redern, about the promised performance of the *Holländer*. The Graf was surprised to find him quite friendly and pleasant, not at all the gloomy and forbidding person whom he had pictured to himself as the composer of *Rienzi*. He had, however, already resigned the post. The new *Intendant* designate was von Küstner from Munich, the very man who had already refused the

score as unsuitable for Germany, and he had not yet arrived. After formal visits to Meyerbeer, to Mendelssohn and to Rellstab he left Berlin having accomplished nothing, and with an uneasy feeling that the production of his opera was postponed *sine die.*

On returning to Leipzig he stayed with Hermann Brockhaus, now Professor of Oriental Languages at the University. Through him the various members of the family were induced to provide an allowance to enable the Wagners to live until the production of his opera. By April 28th he was again in Dresden. The higher theatrical powers were not overjoyed at seeing him; von Lüttichau, the *Intendant*, and Reissiger, the conductor, made little secret of their wish that he had remained in Paris. It will be advisable for the sake of readers who are not acquainted with German theatres to explain the method of their administration, which is a compromise between monarchy and democracy similar to that of political rule in that country. Originally a *Hoftheater* was part of the private establishment of the reigning sovereign—King, Grand Duke, or other magnate; the cost of its maintenance was defrayed from his private purse; the members of the company were all Court officials, and the representations were simply a Court function; the audience consisted mainly of the nobility. But since in most cases the theatre was much larger than could be filled by the privileged entourage of the Court, the public were also admitted on payment to certain parts of the theatre. Eventually all seats had to be paid for, but still the nobility had the right to engage seats in certain parts of the auditorium, which, however, were by no means always the best. Thus in Weimar in Goethe's time the right side was always reserved for the "Adel," while the "bürgerliche" occupied the seats on the left, whence they were often ejected by the students from Jena coming up in force. The custom survived till recently, in so far that no member of the Court nobility would dream of sitting anywhere but on the right side of the first circle, where, although the seats were the worst in the house, it was practically impossible for an outsider to purchase a place. The essential

point is that the theatre is not in Germany run on commercial lines, but still retains some features of a Court function, the Sovereign Prince having a reserved state-box, where on public occasions he sits in the midst of his people.[1] The seats are sold at much less than their value, and the large deficit which results is defrayed from the private purse of the ruler, who holds himself indemnified by the educational advantage to the community in bringing the performances within the reach of the poorer classes. The manager of the whole concern is the *Intendant*, a member of the Court aristocracy, an official who generally—though not always—is without any special knowledge of music or of stage-management. He is in every case that I ever heard of at feud with the conductor, who rules in the musical department, and he is himself ruled by the *prima donna*, or by any one of the male singers who happens to be popular. The public, although in a certain measure in the position of the guest of the ruling Prince, is allowed, and even encouraged, to criticise the performance freely; nevertheless, the final decision is always with the Prince himself, who appoints the *Intendant* and other officials, often controls every detail of the performances, and is the final authority of appeal in every dispute. The practical results are what might be expected; where the ruler is a man of ability and artistic sympathies he will attract the highest talent in the country, artists who again attract others, and the Court, with its theatre, becomes an artistic centre, as was the case in Weimar in Goethe's day, and with the Duke of Meiningen in the eighties, when Hans von Bülow was conductor and *Intendant* in one, and the performances of German and English classics reached a standard never equalled elsewhere. Where this is not the case, where the ruler, fully occupied with politics and administration, can find little leisure to attend to his theatre, he delegates his authority to his *Intendant*. If the conductor is

[1] It will be observed that these remarks on German theatres were written before the revolutions of 1918. As the text is concerned with events of the early forties I have not altered them. The principles remain the same, only details have been altered, and the present conditions are too uncertain to be worth notice.

a man of genius he often tries to over-ride his official superior, and the result is that which always follows when the better man has to serve the worse. In the end the conductor has to give way and resigns his post, as did Liszt in Weimar under Dittersdorf in 1859. Or it may be a singer who obtains the mastery. In such cases the public has a good deal to say. A German public may generally be trusted in its judgment on instrumental music, but its taste in singing is execrable. It is not true that there are no good singers in Germany; there are many who possess excellent voices, and who are also highly musical, which the French and Italian singers often are not; but they are failures in their own country because the German public only looks for dramatic fire and temperament, and is deaf to refined singing.

In Saxony in 1842 the King, Friedrich August II.—the same whom we met with as Crown Prince during the crisis of 1830—cared little for his theatre, and was unmusical. His *Intendant*, von Lüttichau, was a Court nobleman of the kind just described, and the chief conductor was Reissiger, an indolent and phlegmatic musician known as the composer of a tune still heard in ladies' schools as "Weber's Last Thought." After the finished performances and gorgeous decorations of the Paris opera the German theatre seemed to Wagner rather tame. Especially he missed the sonorous effect obtained from the massing of the strings in Paris. Another source of weakness was in the miserable translations of foreign works which had to do duty in Germany. The credit of the opera was mainly upheld by two immensely strong personalities, Joseph Tichatschek and Madame Schröder-Devrient. Wilhelm Fischer and Ferdinand Heine were staunch friends and supporters of Wagner's *Rienzi*, and the singers were full of zeal. The main support of the whole was Tichatschek, whose enthusiasm for his part was unbounded, and was not diminished for the gorgeous costume with silver armour, etc., in which he was to be arrayed. Madame Schröder-Devrient, on the other hand, was not easily reconciled to the rather feeble part assigned to her, that of "Adriano." A serious difficulty

was the enormous length of the opera; after much friendly disputation and rehearsal with Fischer, Wagner was prevailed upon to make important excisions, to sacrifice some of his favourite scenes in order to bring the work into manageable dimensions before the score was handed over to the copyists.

The season was now drawing to a close, and the regular rehearsals could not be commenced before the end of the summer, the first performance being fixed for October. After short visits to Leipzig and to Halle, where his brother Albert, a singer of real musical ability, was struggling with the suffocating conditions of a small and ill-managed opera-house, Wagner took his wife for the summer to Teplitz, where they enjoyed the company of his mother. In July he was back again in Dresden to watch over the interests of the opera and keep his eye on the management. Especially the easy-going Reissiger needed constant stirring. Tichatschek, on the other hand, was unremitting in his efforts; he made propaganda for the work until it became the talk of the town, and his enthusiasm permeated the whole of the personnel. It was he, even more than the composer, who vehemently opposed the drastic excisions which were obviously necessary. As the singers returned from their summer holiday the rehearsals began, Wagner inspiring and imbuing each with his own incomparable energy. Never before had he shone so brilliantly. The excitement and enthusiasm which prevailed did not tend to make the performers more manageable, but he invariably met them with the tact, sympathy and patience which he always showed when dealing with artists; when the impetuous Schröder-Devrient flung her music on the ground and declared it impossible the other singers rallied round the composer and brought her to reason; when Tichatschek persisted in singing copyist's errors his complacent remark "that it would all come right at the performance" was laughingly accepted.

The date finally fixed was October 20th. The public had by this time been wrought up to such a pitch of excitement that there was grave fear of a reaction setting in. There were dangerous rocks ahead. At the grand rehearsal the entire

performance had lasted over six hours; it seemed impossible that any audience accustomed to operas of two-and-a-half to three hours could be induced to sit it out. The prices of the seats had been raised, which was always considered a grievance. On the morning of the day Wagner took a boyish pleasure in watching the public as it streamed to the ticket-office. At 8 p.m. the curtain rose and the long-sustained trumpet-note which opens the overture announced the beginning of the performance. Reissiger conducted, while the composer, filled with trepidation, cowered with his wife in the darkest corner of the theatre, fully prepared for a fiasco. All went admirably. Singers, chorus and orchestra surpassed themselves. The enthusiasm of the audience was immense; after the first act the composer was called out onto the stage, an unusual honour. When the curtain fell after the third act it had already struck ten; Wagner was haunted with a nightmare that the performance would have to be closed before it was finished. With all his magnificent courage this intense nervousness and dread of disaster on the first appearance of his works remained throughout his life. But there were no signs of fatigue on the part of either performers or audience, and he was again called upon to show himself. Tichatschek held them all under his spell; the longer it lasted the stronger he seemed to grow, while Wagner sank more and more into the depths of despair. At the end—towards midnight—the house was still full; he was again called upon to appear, and did so as if in a dream, scarcely able to believe his senses, as if the whole were some sort of devilry.

By eight o'clock on the next morning Wagner was back in the theatre making cuts in the score in readiness for a second performance. He still could not believe in his success, and was seized with a perfect frenzy for excision, cutting out whole pages, until at last Tichatschek came and took the score away from him. Not till Fischer congratulated him, and a letter from the *Intendant* arrived thanking him "for his fine work" did he begin to realise the truth, namely that it had been a splendid success.

For the second performance, six days later, reasonable cuts were agreed to. It was still, however, much too long, and subsequently, for the sake of two elderly ladies of the royal family who wanted to hear the work but were unable to endure the fatigue, it was decided to cut it into two parts between the second and third acts, to be given on successive evenings, the first being called *Rienzi's Greatness*, the second *Rienzi's Fall*. Eventually, however, as the public resented having to pay double entrance, it was restored to its original form as a one-act opera. He received as his honorarium 300 thalers, nearly three times the amount usually paid for a new opera. It was repeated many times, always before crowded houses.

Richard Wagner was certainly not in the habit of undervaluing his own works; at the same time, his judgment was generally sober and his criticism just. Although naturally gratified at the reception of *Rienzi*, he now began to ask himself whether it was really worthy of such a success. The performance had been far from faultless, and it was a significant fact that the parts which had been most applauded were just the weakest. To us, judging from the knowledge of a later generation, it is evident that the result was largely due less to its own intrinsic merits as an opera than to the splendid scenic decoration, the excitement which had been deliberately fanned by his friends among the singers, and to its novelty. We can imagine the sensation created at that time by such scenes as that where the hero appears upon the stage mounted upon his war-horse, clad in gorgeous armour, leading the citizens to battle, although nowadays a malevolent critic might think that it savoured of the circus. The taste for theatrical shows had been created by Meyerbeer; now Dresden could rival Paris, and with the work of one of her own sons could out-Meyerbeer Meyerbeer himself. But the composer could not but feel how far higher was the inspiration which he had received from the *Flying Dutchman*. The score of the latter opera had been lying in Berlin now for a year, and as there seemed no prospect of an early production he wrote for it to be returned to him with a view to its production in Dresden.

Wagner's relations to Madame Schröder-Devrient had somewhat cooled since *Rienzi;* indeed, the *diva* was by no means too well pleased at his having written an opera expressly for Dresden in which she was not the principal heroine. But she was far too genuine a character to be influenced by such feelings for long, and their friendship was soon renewed. Wagner felt rather embarrassed at being made the confidant of her love affairs, for she was just then contemplating a second marriage, which, however, did not take place till a few years later. It is impossible to overrate the influence which this wonderful woman had upon the moral and artistic development of his character; the enthusiastic words which he addressed to her in Leipzig after first hearing her seem scarcely an exaggeration.[1] As a singer her organ was by no means of the finest quality, and was imperfectly trained; even her musical apprehension was not of the first order; and yet she became one of the greatest singers of her day, if not of all time, proving once more how much more important to a singer are spiritual endowments—"music" in Plato's sense, a harmonious rhythm of life—than technical accomplishments. Magnetic, ardent, impulsive almost to frenzy, the innate warmth and sincerity of her heart, united with a natural conscientiousness and a sense of order, preserved her from going astray. Her sympathies were whole-heartedly with the poor and the lower classes; with a thousand unnamed acts of kindness she brightened their homes, and with her large fortune relieved their distresses. Only in her loves she was like a child. Her conception of a woman's duty was absolute self-sacrifice, unconditional surrender of herself to the object of her love.

It may well be asked how it came that a woman of her condition, enjoying as she did well-nigh everything that life has to offer—success, wealth, popularity, influence—should have been unhappy. Yet so it was; the outside world knows and recks little of the inner life of a great artist, its unfulfilled

[1] See above, Chapter II.

longings, its utter solitude. Her journal, written for her own private record, is filled with passionate cries of distress :

> When I returned to my home overwhelmed with applause, glowing with joy in my art, I was alone. There was not a soul who understood me, who could rejoice with me.

And again :

> Had I but one living being about me, a faithful dog, any living creature that was devoted to me ! How I long for the familiar exchange of thoughts—but so alone !—and to write the turmoil within my breast !—I cannot do it ! I need the warm life of the word from lip to lip, and when the word fails, the glance of the eye penetrating deep into the soul. It is a hard privation to have to wander through life so un-understood !

The yearning for love, for sympathy with fellow-beings, that blessing of all blessings, so freely enjoyed and so little appreciated by commonplace natures, but denied to the genius, breathes through every page of her journal, and was the cause of the tragedy of her life. She had, early in her career, married a member of the great actor family Devrient, but the marriage was not happy and was soon dissolved. Her second marriage was disastrous. Soon after her engagement in Dresden she had fallen under the influence of a Saxon officer, a villain of more than common infamy. To the warnings of friends who tried to convince her of the true character of her lover she turned a deaf ear ; when signing the marriage contract she covered the writing with her left arm in order not to know what she was signing. By this deed she bestowed upon him all that she possessed or ever would possess, even to the moiety of her pension on retiring from the theatre, and made herself his absolute slave. His only purpose had been to get her money to gamble with, and he now threw off the mask. He drove her from theatre to theatre and took away everything that she possessed, even the furniture of her house. She could not be freed without his consent, for which, after he had stripped her of everything, he demanded an exorbitant sum. It was subscribed by her friends, and in the following year the marriage

was dissolved; but her voice was ruined, her artistic reputation was gone, her health broken and she was left a beggar. This was in 1847–48, some years after the period at which we have arrived. Two years later she married a nobleman named von Bock, who loved her tenderly and took her away to his estate in Livonia. Here she might have found peace, but her restless nature could not endure the monotony of country life. She imprudently returned with her husband to Dresden, where they found themselves proscribed for having shown sympathy with the revolution of 1849, and were banished from Saxony and from Russia.

To return to our narrative: the remainder of the year was spent on concert tours with Madame Schröder-Devrient and her mother, Sophie Schröder, once famous on the stage. In Leipzig numbers from *Rienzi* were produced, together with Mendelssohn's Overture to *Ruy-Blas*, but opera, singer, overture and all else were thrown into the shade by the recitation of the aged and toothless actress. In December Madame Schröder-Devrient was invited to sing at a grand Court concert in Berlin, whither Wagner accompanied her. Franz Liszt had also been invited to play at the same concert, and the *diva*, who was a little jealous of Liszt's enormous reputation, indulged in one of her malicious freaks, throwing Wagner into no small confusion. Liszt had heard of the success of *Rienzi*, and asked her about the composer. She thereupon introduced "the composer of *Rienzi*, *whom you now wish to know, after having in Paris shown him the door.*" This, of course, was a gross exaggeration, but Liszt had to admit having entirely forgotten his visit, and the good-nature and gentleness with which he endured the singer's pitiless teasing till at last he fell flat on his face on the floor imploring mercy made a profound impression on Wagner. Thus began a friendship destined to endure until severed by death.

Preparations were now made for the production of *Der Holländer* in Dresden. It was now in three acts and the scene was laid in Norway. Tichatschek had no part, but Schröder-Devrient was consoled for her former disappointment and

threw herself passionately into her rôle as "Senta." The terrible inner conflict with which she was racked had reduced her to a mere shadow; she seemed on the brink of a serious illness. Yet the strain seemed to react favourably on her art; never had she shown such youthful freshness.

The first performance of the opera was on January 2nd, 1843. Its success was moderate compared with that of *Rienzi;* after four performances it was withdrawn owing to the absence of the principal singer.[1] The reasons for this comparative failure are not difficult to discern. The public had expected a brilliant spectacular work like *Rienzi*, but the interest of the later opera is very little dependent upon theatrical spectacle. What there is—the two ships at the quay and the vision at the end—is apt to become ridiculous, even with the best stage-management, and here the stage-management was very far indeed from being perfect. The *Holländer* represents a transitional stage in Wagner's art; on the one hand the composer has not thrown off the spectacular tendencies of his preceding works, on the other he is impelled by the inspiration of his subject to present it in a continuous flow, untrammelled by the striving after musical and scenic effect; it is neither one thing nor the other, and in spite of its many beauties it pleased no one. Wagner himself was in the deepest dejection, not from the failure of his work, but because he now for the first time began to realise how far removed were the ideals of the public from his own. His aim was not personal success, but the realisation of his art. All the brilliant talent at the disposal of the Dresden Opera-House, all the enthusiasm of the *personnel* engaged at the performance, had not succeeded in producing a representation of either of his works as he had conceived them; their real significance had been missed in the glamour of adventitious superficialities. To cite one instance, Tichatschek himself had failed to realise "the gloomy demoniacal foundation of *Rienzi's* nature." The representation of the Dutchman by Wächter had been still more inadequate;

[1] It was not given again in Dresden until 1865.

he was nothing but a morose declaimer. In fact, the performances had only served to emphasise the innate antagonism between officialism and art, the impossibility of realising high intellectual ideals in the atmosphere of a Government institution.[1]

[1] Wagner's comments on pp. 291–2 of *Mein Leben* are well worth reading as an indication of his artistic character and aims.

CHAPTER VIII

"RIENZI," "DER HOLLÄNDER," AND "DIE SARAZENIN."

"Rienzi der letzte der Tribunen."

The persons of the drama are:

Cola di Rienzi.	Raimondo, Papal legate.
Irene, his sister.	Baroncelli, Cecco del Vecchio } Citizens.
Stefano Colonna, Adriano Colonna, Paolo Orsini } Nobles.	

The Overture in D-Major opens with a slow introduction on Rienzi's prayer in the fifth act, leading to a vivace movement in which the prayer again appears in quick time along with other motives, among them the battle-cry of the Romans, "*Santo Spirito Cavaliere*." The composition is fairly representative of the overtures fashionable at the time, but is characterised by triviality and bad taste. The vulgarity of transforming the solemn prayer into a lively operatic melody is worthy of Meyerbeer at his worst, and must have caused Wagner much amusement in later years. The heavy brass is fully employed, and the constant *fortissimo* is fatiguing to the hearer. On the whole, there is little endeavour to put into practice the principles of his Paris essay, or to produce anything higher than a brilliant piece of music for light diversion.

The scene of the opera is laid in Rome in the middle of the fourteenth century, but it is Rome without its heart and in a state of anarchy; the Pope is absent in Avignon, while nobles and mob vie with each other in deeds of violence. Cola di Rienzi was at the beginning of the opera a private citizen, but

had some connection with the Papal Court from having once been in Avignon as an emissary of the republic.

The curtain rises on a scene of violent movement. A party of the Orsini family are attempting to carry off Rienzi's sister Irene, when the head of the rival family of Colonna comes up with his followers. The Papal Legate, Raimondo, vainly tries to intervene; not till Rienzi appears in person with two of his friends, Baroncelli and Cecco del Vecchio, is peace restored. Irene is released, and the nobles, hurling scorn at Rienzi, slink off to fight elsewhere. Rienzi remains in possession of the field, and all join in urging him to place himself at the head of the people and lead them against the nobles. In the terzet of Rienzi, Irene and Adriano Colonna and the following duet of the two latter the feebleness of Adriano's part comes strongly to light. All are in deadly earnest, and to him is left the choice between severing his tie with Rienzi or boldly renouncing the Colonnas and supporting the right and his love; but he is incapable of a decision, and can only lisp "Rienzi, you are terrible," and dally with Irene. The music is melodious, but without special character; it has neither the freshness of Weber nor the dramatic incisiveness of Meyerbeer. We must suppose this scene to take place in the dead of night, and with the first rays of the dawn the conversation of the lovers is interrupted by a trumpet-call, several times repeated, drawing nearer. It is Rienzi's call to the people, who stream from their houses. The chorus is suddenly broken through by rich harmonies from the organ in the Lateran, followed by an *a capella* chorus calling the slumbering citizens of Rome to awake to the new and glorious day about to dawn. All this is suggested by Meyerbeer's *Prophète*. Wagner's fine musical sense had been struck with the beautiful sound of the invisible organ and of unaccompanied voices, but dramatically it has no motivation. There is no dramatic reason why organist and choir should be having music just at that moment of daybreak; the impression is purely acoustic. It is "effect without a cause." The door of the Lateran now opens and discloses an assembly of monks and priests. Rienzi

n his silver armour stands at their head, supported by the egate, and is received with acclamation by the people.

Act II.—A battle has been fought and the popular party nder Rienzi and the clericals have gained the victory over he nobles. Their strongholds have been demolished and they hemselves forced to submit to humiliating terms. The curtain ises on the peace rejoicings; a popular festival has been rranged, and the heralds approach crowned with garlands nd with silver wands in their hands proclaiming the peace n a female chorus of great beauty (note again the acoustic ffect of unaccompanied voices approaching from a distance nd receding). But the peace is a hollow one; the Nobili when left alone at once conspire to assassinate Rienzi and eize the Capitol. Adriano's voice is raised in vain; he is gain left hesitating whether to betray his father or Rienzi.

The Finale brings the official festivities in celebration of he peace. After some processions Rienzi enters with his upporters and receives the foreign ambassadors. He is now t the height of his glory, and success has turned his head. In he course of his speech he makes the astounding demand that he forthcoming election of the Emperor shall be submitted o him for ratification.[1] Adriano warns him secretly of the plot for his assassination. There follows a grand ballet with cenes displaying the ancient glory of Rome, and an allegory of the union of the old order with the new. In the midst of he gaiety Orsini aims a blow at Rienzi, but his dagger breaks against his secret shirt of mail. All the Nobili are at once rrested and led away to execution. Adriano and Irene implore Rienzi to spare Colonna. A curtain is drawn back and discloses he Nobili about to be executed and kneeling in prayer. Rienzi refers their judgment to the people, who are reluctantly persuaded to pardon them. The act ends with a sextet supported by a chorus of eight parts.

Act III.—The Nobili have suddenly left the city in a body

[1] This claim was actually made by the historical Rienzi and was the main cause of his downfall. Wagner has substituted "the people of Rome" for Rienzi himself.

and are arming to return; there is a panic in Rome; the people are in uproar and blame Rienzi for having spared the nobles. They all march off under his leadership, singing their hymn of war with Rienzi's battle-cry, "Santo Spirito Cavaliere," distantly reminiscent of the Dresden "Amen." When they are gone Adriano enters, still lamenting his inability to decide what he shall do, until his soliloquy is interrupted by the great bell of the Capitol. The citizens return fully armed, Rienzi seated on his war-horse with Irene on foot beside him; they all parade to martial music in the orchestra, continuing the war-hymn. Adriano vainly throws himself in the way with one more appeal for peace; he is left with Irene and the women, who fall on their knees with a prayer to the Virgin. The citizens return after a few minutes' absence, having overcome the Nobili and slain Colonna, whose body is brought onto the stage. Adriano defies Rienzi, and, vowing vengeance, is about to leave, but once more returns to Irene, and with another weighty chorus the act ends.

At the opening of *Act IV.*, in the night following the last events a group of citizens has gathered in front of the Lateran. It is rumoured that the Emperor has recalled his ambassador, and that even Raimondo, the Pope's legate, is gone. Grave suspicion falls upon Rienzi; Baroncelli, with a fine scorn of probability, declares that he is seeking an alliance with the Nobili! Adriano comes in upon them masked and exclaims: "That is true!" Together they decree his destruction. A *Te Deum* is about to be sung, and Raimondo, who has not left, leads a procession to the Lateran. Another procession follows headed by Rienzi, who scowls suspiciously on the conspirators. Adriano, on seeing Irene by the side of her brother, at once secedes from them; the conspiracy is broken up and they all cry: "Long live Rienzi!" As he enters the church an ominous hymn proceeds from the choir; they are singing no *Te Deum* but "*Vae vae tibi maledicto.*" At the door Rienzi is met by Raimondo, who pronounces the ban of the Church upon him and closes the door in his face; affixed to it is seen the Pope's bull of excommunication. Adriano

attempts to detach Irene from the tribune, but she rejects him with scorn and flies to her brother.

The first scene of *Act V.* is one of great lyric beauty. Rienzi has realised that with the withdrawal of the papal support all is lost for him. His dreams of a free and majestic Rome are finished, and he can only await his own inevitable doom. Alone in the hall of the Capitol, he humbles himself before God and pours forth his soul in prayer. He is joined by Irene, the only being left to him, the only one within whose breast one spark of Roman feeling yet glows. She can do no more for him; he urges her to save herself, to join Adriano and be reconciled with the nobles. She rejects his proposal with indignation and clings to his breast, declaring her intention to die with him; united they shall fall, the last of the Romans. Adriano enters to save her; she pushes him away and he falls senseless on the floor. The cries of the people outside preparing to storm the Capitol are heard growing louder as the night closes over them. Under the leadership of the Nobili they are firing the building. Once more Rienzi endeavours to address them; the building falls, and all are crushed under its ruins.

The weak points of the work have been indicated; they are on the surface. As an opera it is harsh, unmelodious and turgid; it is over-composed and over-orchestrated, especially it is over-loaded with brass and percussion instruments. There are four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, an ophicleide, kettle-drums, triangle, side-drum, big drum and cymbals. The continued employment of this weight of brass is most distressing to the hearer. The most repulsive of all the abominations of the Italian opera, that of giving the part of a male lover to a female singer, is retained with the rest. Nor has the composer yet found the equation between music and the drama; the music follows the events, not the emotional motives of the events which form its proper sphere. Events are the province of words and gesture, not of music. Something takes place on the stage, and is accompanied by *suitable* music, that is all; the music reveals nothing which is not already told in the words and the action, and is therefore

superfluous; it has no *organic* connection with the other elements of the drama, but is superimposed upon them as an ornament. We have here arrived at the vital defect in the *genre* opera, and shall defer further comment to a later chapter. The diction and versification are very poor. Wagner when he wrote the text had been accustomed to conduct wretched German translations of French and Italian operas, in which the words counted for nothing, and his ear had become thoroughly corrupted.

These are faults of technique, but we must not overlook the finer features which lie beneath the surface. The fledgling eagle has not yet learned to fly, but we may see its efforts to soar. Apart from the unfortunate figure of Adriano *Rienzi* is a tragedy of a very high order. The character of the hero is nobly conceived and Irene is the worthy sister of the great tribune. The decisive scene for both is the opening one of the last act. Rienzi, weak and vain in his hour of success, is almost sublime in misfortune. The scenes, too, are often well-contrived and effective. The composer has condensed the two epochs of Rienzi's career into a single event, thus gaining unity and simplicity, but he has been compelled to introduce battles, which are always a snare to the dramatist; they are judiciously kept behind the scene, but at the expense of dramatic effect and vividness.

"Der fliegende Holländer."

The legend of the Flying Dutchman and his Phantom Ship must be very ancient; it seems to be a variant of the Wandering Jew, who perhaps goes back to Judas, or even to Cain. But our well-known story of the seaman who, failing to weather the Cape of Good Hope, swore that he would beat on until the Day of Judgment, and was condemned to eternal cruising for his profanity, is entirely modern. He appears to the mariner in the midst of the most violent gale, carrying a full spread of canvas, disappearing suddenly[1] or wishing to

[1] The explanation given by sailors to the present writer in his youth was that the illusion was caused by the jib-sheet block, which being nearly on a level with the horizon might in dirty weather be mistaken for a ship in full sail, which, of course, would seem to vanish when the weather cleared.

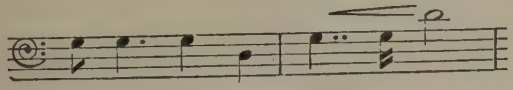
eliver letters to persons in Holland long since dead; if accepted hey will sink the ship. The earliest printed account is in *Blackwood's Magazine* for May, 1821, where it is in the form f a short story. It became very popular; Marryat's novel vas published in 1839. One Fitzball, a popular dramatist of he day, wove it into a piece for the stage, which was being iven at the Adelphi Theatre in 1827 when Heinrich Heine vas in London, and he may possibly have seen it, for he told he story in 1831 and introduced the motive of the Dutchman eing saved by the love of a woman. Wagner's version is in ll essentials the same as that of Heine, only he has changed he names and added the feeble and superfluous part of Erik.

The persons are:

DALAND, a Norwegian mariner.
SENTA, his daughter.
ERIK, a hunter, betrothed to Senta.
MARY, Senta's confidential servant or companion.
THE MATE OF DALAND'S SHIP.
THE DUTCHMAN.

Wagner has himself told us that the music of the opera rew out of Senta's ballad in the second act.[1] The leading notive may be expressed in his own words; the longing for est after the storms of life.[2] Drastic expression is given to it n the overture, which is a very fine composition, reminiscent f Beethoven's F Minor Sonata, and with nothing of the lap-trap of *Rienzi*. It begins savagely with empty fifths on trings and wind, broken through with a cry of distress on the

[1] Miss Kennedy Fraser has traced this phrase back to the folk-songs f the sea-faring population of the Barra Isles, where she heard it in the ollowing form:—



ee her paper in the *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 1918–19, p. 9.

[2] *Ges. Schr.*, iv. 265.

horns, a phrase which forms the kernel of the composition and is always associated with the Dutchman (see the Musical Examples, No. 1). Through the turmoil, while sails are splitting and spars crashing, there appears the figure of the Phantom Ship, sailing peacefully on a calm sea with all her sails set (No. 2), allegorical of the Dutchman's fate, the cruel striving with intervals of peace and rest cheered by a woman's love. The overture ends with a full close.

Act I. opens on a rocky coast in Norway. A ship appears in sight and anchors near the shore. A violent storm is raging, and while the crew are busy furling the sails Daland, the captain, lands, leaving the watch to the mate, who after singing a short ballad falls asleep. Suddenly the wild music of the Dutchman is heard in the orchestra and the Phantom Ship appears in the offing with black masts and blood-red sails. She comes swiftly up and anchors close to the other ship. The Dutchman goes on shore; every seven years he is permitted to land; should he ever find a woman who will love him truly till death he will be saved; that is, he will be permitted to die. "The Devil," says Heine, "is a fool, and does not believe in the faith of women." The Dutchman has long given up all hope and only looks to the Day of Judgment for his release. On the shore he meets with Daland. A bargain is struck; the Dutchman speaks of untold wealth in the cargo of his ship, all of which he will give to Daland in return for the hand of his daughter and the shelter of his home. Daland promises to speak for him, and the two sail off to his dwelling.

Act II. introduces us to one of those *Spinnstuben* which were such a thorn to the pious in the later Middle Ages, but which did so much to stimulate the practice and preserve the tradition of dance and song. The village maidens are singing gaily as they spin, and teasing Senta, who sits idly in a huge chair, dreamily contemplating a picture of the Flying Dutchman which hangs on the wall. She has been deeply touched with the story of his fate, and the thought of saving him absorbs her entire life. The taunts of her companions drive her to distraction. She sings the ballad of the "pale mariner";

the close, with a sudden impulse, as if under the spell of an inspiration, she starts from her seat and declares that she will be the one to save him. At the moment her lover, Erik, enters the room and announces that her father's ship has returned and that he will presently be with them. The next scene is preparation for what is to follow; Erik relates as a dream everything as it actually happens. Senta, impressed, but almost absent in mind, hums the last line of her ballad gazing at the picture: " When, thou pale seaman, wilt thou find her? pray to Heaven that a woman may be faithful to him!" At these words the Dutchman enters at the door, pale and worn and habited exactly as in the picture, followed by her father. He remains standing, as if expecting her to come to him. Amazed, almost beside herself, she remains speechless, her eyes fixed upon him, while her father tells of his project for their union. Both remaining silent, he retires, leaving them alone. The scene is extraordinarily impressive. On both the consciousness has dawned that the day of deliverance has come, but at the moment both are too dazed to realise the truth or to utter their thoughts. There is not a trace of hysterical levity in her reply to him; all is firm resolve with full consciousness of all that is involved: " Whoe'er thou art, whate'er my fate, I know a woman's holy duty. I will be faithful unto death." The music, though still Meyerbeerish in character, and not free from operatic trivialities, closely follows the situation.

In the *third Act* the two ships are still at anchor close to one another. Daland's is a scene of great festivity, but on the Dutchman's all is silent as the grave. The maidens and sailors call them to come forth and join them; at first no answer is returned, but in reply to their continued raillery the crew start up, sing a diabolical incoherent chorus and disappear again. Around their ship the sea becomes boisterous, remaining calm elsewhere. Senta comes to the shore with Erik, who remonstrates with her. The Dutchman, finding them together, thinks that she is untrue, and hurries off to his ship alone. As he sails away Senta, tearing herself from her companions

and shouting "True till death!" plunges into the raging waters. Immediately the Phantom Ship sinks beneath the waves, and the figures of the Dutchman and Senta, clasped in each other's arms, are seen in a vision rising above the storm.

Mr. Chamberlain's remarks on the plan of *Der fliegende Holländer* are worth quoting:[1]

> The fault of *Rienzi* is the excessive ramification of the action, and the preponderance of the formal historical elements. *Der fliegende Holländer* is a reaction from these; it reduces the action to its simplest terms and eschews all historical formalism. . . . It was originally designed for a single act, which would have been much clearer. Even as it is, it is the simplest and most compressed of all Wagner's works, and in respect of the suppression of conventional and historical elements it ranks above *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*.

Mr. Chamberlain, however, goes on to say that the absence of prosy conventional elements should have afforded scope for the freer development of the purely human motives which are the proper sphere of music, but the composer has not availed himself of the opportunity thus offered. The inner, strictly human motives remain, like the music, undeveloped, and have to be supplemented by the executant, as we see from the elaborate and rather mechanical instructions which Wagner has laid down for the guidance of the performers, while the composition itself is padded with incidental matter, which, so far from illuminating, only distracts from the central interest. Unfortunately, he has again been ruled by the common fallacy of inexperienced dramatists that a love episode in some form or other is an essential feature of every play. The injury which a work suffers from a love story being dragged in when it has no organic connection with the principal motive will be realised if we imagine the inane part of the lover Erik expunged, with all that depends thereon, and note how the drama as a whole is improved by the process. When shorn of the love scenes the drama becomes almost perfect, although slight. When will poets learn that sexual love is, speaking generally, not a

[1] *Das Drama Richard Wagners*, pp. 42 *sqq.*

roper subject for art, and that if present it must be powerful nough to control all the rest, as in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Tristan und Isolde!* In *Der fliegende Holländer* we have, fact, the same phenomenon as in *Rienzi* — a noble idea adequately expressed. The great superiority of the later ork over the earlier one is due partly to the improvement his taste as he threw off the spell of Meyerbeer, but still more the choice of subject-matter, to his having exchanged story for myth.

The only characters of any moment are Senta and the utchman. Senta has been described as a silly girl who is rried away by a hysterical fancy. Be it so; hysteria is t a mark of base natures; it often affects the strongest of ther sex, and few people of highly strung and imaginative mperament are entirely free from its influence; the maid Domrémy was hysterical. Hysteria is only repulsive when has no moral root and gives way in the hour of trial; this not Senta's case. Of the Dutchman we learn everything his great soliloquy on first landing. Daland is insignificant; is a merchant seaman whose whole life centres around his ofits.

Of technical matters there is little to remark. The work divided into arias, ensembles, etc., with ritornels and cadenzas the regular pattern. The versification is often very careless; e composer brings himself among the rocks by inattention the metre, such as suddenly falling into anapæstic rhythm, oducing a horrible perversion of accents. Another operatic annerism, the meaningless repetition of words in order to read the music, would not have been counted as a fault at at time by audiences who cared nothing for the words.

The great difficulty of the representation is with the two ips. Wagner made impossible demands upon the stage anagement, and no theatre in which I have ever witnessed performance has succeeded in making the effect other an ridiculous. The stage-directions are that the ships are anchored close to the shore," and close to each other; they e not beached nor moored, and being at anchor they must

have room to swing with the tide, that is, they must be at some little distance, say half a mile away. Would it not be feasible to represent them a little farther out in the offing, so that they would appear much smaller, with a stretch of sea between them and the shore? With the aid of a cinematograph the Dutchman could then be made to come up in a natural way instead of banging against the stage on wheels. The ships would have to be near enough to the shore for the voices to be distinctly heard, and the figures of the men moving on board and communicating with the shore by boats would present no difficulty; the effect would be very picturesque. The "Jack-in-the-Box" effect in the third act of the Dutchman's crew suddenly starting up to sing and as suddenly disappearing again is, I fear, beyond remedy, but much could be done to tone it down by judicious lighting and by making the men almost invisible, as they would be from their small size under the arrangement that I have suggested.

"Die Sarazenin."

It is not my intention to discuss those works which Wagner did not consider of sufficient importance to be included in his collected writings, but there is one belonging to this period which ought to be noticed because of the light which it throws upon his artistic strivings. The first sketch of *Die Sarazenin* was made in 1841 and worked out very fully in 1843. This last detailed sketch is all that we possess, it was never fully dramatised, nor was the music composed.[1]

The scene is laid in Italy in the middle of the thirteenth century, soon after the decease of the greatest of the Hohenstaufen, Friedrich II. Manfred, his natural son, is living in Oriental state in Capua, surrounded by a motley court of adherents. The glory of the Hohenstaufen race is gone; the only representative of the dynasty is an infant. There comes to Manfred a Saracenic girl, a singer named Fatima, and urges him to action, to recover his heritage, the Empire.

[1] The sketch is published in *Ges. Schr.*, xi.

On being asked whence she comes she replies that she has been sent by his dead father, Friedrich, who is honoured by Christians and Moslems alike. Fatima is, indeed, the daughter of Friedrich II. by an Arab woman, and therefore Manfred's half-sister, hence her interest in him; but this is known only to herself. A creature of the Pope named Burello then demands restoration of the lands withheld from him, and on his claim being rejected goes over to the Guelph party.

In the second act Manfred is marching with a party of his followers towards Luceria, where there is a large colony of Saracens founded by Friedrich, devoted to the Hohenstaufen. Manfred falls asleep in the desert, and the vision of his father appears to him, urging him onwards. On his waking Fatima unexpectedly appears standing on a rock and calling to him. She prophecies his immediate triumph. Who is this mysterious maiden who seems to come from another world? At first he takes her for a continuation of his vision, but finding her human is seized with a violent love for her. He seeks to reach her on the rock, but she escapes singing.

The third act is in Luceria. The Pope's emissary makes an attempt to secure the town, but it is frustrated by the entry of Manfred at the head of his forces, with the aid of Fatima.

In Act IV Manfred declares his love to Fatima, who replies that she can only aid him so long as he keeps distant from her, and that she is about to marry another, a Moslem named Nurredin. The nobles of the country come in to pay homage to Manfred and offer him the imperial crown, which he rejects for the sake of the legitimate heir, the infant Conradin. Fatima then announces the death of Conradin, and Manfred forthwith accepts the crown.

The fifth act is laid in Naples, where preparations are being made for Manfred's coronation. There is a scene between Fatima and her affianced lover, Nurredin, whose mind is poisoned against her by the Guelph agent, Burello; he is made to believe that she is unfaithful to him and that she loves Manfred. He lies in wait for Manfred as he returns

from the coronation and is about to plunge a dagger into his breast, but Fatima throws herself in the way and is herself stabbed. As she dies she reveals her secret to her brother, Manfred.

The subject of *Die Sarazenin* has been described as historical, and it has been supposed that in returning to history after the mythical *Holländer* Wagner took a backward step, and was hesitating between the two. I think this view rests upon a misunderstanding ; the subject-matter of *Die Sarazenin* is not historical in the sense in which *Rienzi* is historical. It can scarcely even be said to have a historical framework ; it is laid in a historical period, and historical names and events are employed to give a medieval colouring, but the interest is wholly psychological. What are the political motives, the feuds of Guelphs and Ghibellines, the opportune rumour of the death of the infant ruler, etc., compared to the loves of Manfred and Fatima, and the anomalous situation which they create ?

So little does the dramatist care for politics that we are not even told how Manfred's schemes terminate ; with the death of Fatima the drama is at an end. The significant fact is that the work was put aside and never completed, and the reason is, I think, not far to seek. He felt that it was a failure ; and it was a failure because of the political motives which were dragged in irrelevantly and artificially ; their effect had been miscalculated in the composition. So long as there was nothing more than a vague political idea towards which the hero was striving the path was clear enough, but when he came to represent definite details, such as the intrigues of the papal agent, etc., the thrill of interest was lost. One has only to read the prosy dialogue of the third and fourth acts to realise how the interest flags. Herein lies the real importance of *Die Sarazenin*. Wagner was being drawn instinctively but irresistibly to pyschology and the myth. The *Holländer* revealed to him their possibilities, *Die Sarazenin* the danger of introducing historical details. The problem was no new one. It had occupied Goethe in his earlier life.

Aristotle had a keen perception of it when he laid down the rule that poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history, because it deals with universals, history with particular fictions. To adopt a popular distinction history is science, mythology is art.

CHAPTER IX

DRESDEN—SECOND PERIOD

THE success of *Rienzi* had been immense, but there were dissentient voices. As might be expected, the opposition began in the press. All through his life Wagner was able to carry with him the public, and generally the executant artists; the antagonism was always with the professed critics and journalists. For the present, however, it was comparatively weak, and, supported as he was by the higher theatrical authorities, the Court and the public, it had little influence. Among his immediate circle there was one serious defection, that of Heinrich Laube. The old friend who had courageously befriended him in obscurity and poverty, who had fought manfully for *Rienzi*, was thoroughly estranged by *Der fliegende Holländer;* it appeared to him "pale and ghostly." The breach was permanent; it was not so much the actual work as Wagner's general artistic tendencies to which he took exception. He thought that Wagner was trying to enforce as general principles canons only valid for himself individually. They argued the question until late into the night, walking in the Zwinger Gardens. "Wagner," he says, "was a dexterous disputant."

The first performances had been under the bâton of Reissiger. Almost immediately after the production of *Rienzi* two of the conductors of the *Hoftheater* died within a few days of each other; one was the veteran Morlacchi, whom we met with in the earlier part of this work as the rival of Weber; the other was Musikdirektor Rastrelli. From November onwards Wagner had been permitted to conduct his own opera, and now all eyes were turned towards him as a prospective

ccessor to one of the vacant posts. There was a large number f applicants for Rastrelli's post of *Musikdirektor*, the lower f the two. Wagner did not apply for it, but after long onsideration the formal offer was made to him by von Lüttichau n January 5th, 1843, with the usual condition to which every onductor, including Weber, had submitted, of his serving r the first year on approval. Wagner's reply is given verbatim om the archives of the Dresden theatre by Robert Prölss.[1] He declines the offer, and enters at length into the reasons which have impelled him to do so. Since his experience of Paris has taught him what an orchestra properly organised nder a competent conductor can achieve, he cannot regard he discipline of the Dresden orchestra as satisfactory. The naterial is of the highest quality, but to remedy all that is wrong would need trenchant reforms, which he could not undertake unless he felt that he enjoyed the full confidence, n the one hand of the Direction, on the other of the individual xecutants. This he would not have under the conditions roposed, and the year of probation would give occasion to very member of the orchestra to criticise his action and undermine his authority in the subordinate position which e would hold as *Musikdirektor*. Should the Direction see fit o offer him the higher post of *Kapellmeister* he would accept t, on the understanding that he would resign it at once in he event of his losing the confidence of his superior.

Wagner's decision produced consternation among his friends; especially his wife, who by this time, no doubt, had surmounted her distress at leaving Paris, and saw nothing but a fresh spell of starvation before her. But von Lüttichau, to his honour, rightly judged the man with whom he had to deal and accepted his frank and manly letter in the spirit in which it was intended. It was no endeavour to force his hand, to use the favour of the public to wring from him the higher appointment; he knew that Wagner was incapable of

[1] *Beitr. z. Gesch. des Dresdner Hoftheaters*, p. 124. The date is there wrongly quoted as June 5th instead of January 5th. Also in Kapp und Kastner, i., p. 323.

such impertinence. As *Intendant* he had no authority to bestow the higher appointment, it was in the gift of the King himself; but he persuaded his royal master formally to offer the post to Wagner. On February 2nd an official meeting was convened in the room of the *Intendant*, and the King's rescript appointing him *Hofkapellmeister* for life with a salary of 1,500 thalers (£225) without any condition was read to him. Still he hesitated. His whole mind was bent on composing. Would the strenuous duties of a Court *Kapellmeister* leave him the rest and the leisure necessary for composition? In the end his course was decided partly by his sense of duty towards his wife, and of the necessity of making a provision for her in the event of his death; partly by the entreaties of Caroline von Weber, the widow of the composer, who had long suffered in silent indignation at the performances of her husband's works and now wished to see them in the hands of the only available person who was competent to direct them. He accepted the post, received the congratulations of his colleagues, took the usual service oath, and entered upon his duties at once. A few days later he was received in audience by the King, who, in the course of conversation, honoured him with some sensible and trenchant criticism of his two operas.

It was not long before his old creditors in Leipzig, Riga and elsewhere found him out. Among his worshippers who burdened him with invitations to parties and feasts were many who could have afforded him relief without much inconvenience to themselves. Only one person divined what was oppressing his soul, Madame Schröder-Devrient; she lent him 1,000 thalers, which sum enabled him to satisfy all demands and to start life afresh. He was now in receipt of a sufficient salary under the conditions prevailing at that time to enable him to live comfortably in the position which he held, and with a little good management and self-restraint even to save for a time of need. But good management and self-restraint were foreign to Wagner's character; he had no sooner paid off his old debts than he began to make new ones. He installed himself in a commodious house (Ostra Allee No. 6), amply furnished,

ith a view over the Zwinger, purchased valuable decorations, aintings, etc., and a concert grand, "as was proper for a young apellmeister who is settling himself in life." Above all, he ovided himself with an excellent library of books chosen o suit his special taste for history and mythology. Wagner as always a great and retentive reader; his knowledge of istory was very respectable; he had a fair acquaintance ith the representative literature of Europe ancient and odern, while his knowledge of German medieval saga legend nd myth was profound. It was during these years of official fe in Dresden that the systematic foundation of his life-long udies was laid. Among the books which formed part of his brary equipment were Grimm's *German Mythology*, J. G. roysen's *History of Alexander* and *History of Hellenism*, ibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and many more of first-rate uthority. He made representative collections of German, alian and French literature, and of the ancient classics in ne vain hope that his official duties would leave him time to quire a reading knowledge of those languages which he did ot already know.

Geheimrath Freiherr August von Lüttichau, *Intendant* f the Dresden *Hoftheater* from 1824 to 1862, and now Wagner's mmediate superior, was a typical German official. Strict in ne performance of his duties, courteous, warm-hearted and ncere, he was entirely destitute of imagination, and confined y the necessary trammels of officialism. He had been brought p as a forester, and owed his position, not to any special ptitude for the stage or knowledge of art, but to Court favour. or the present the relations between him and Wagner were nost cordial. Wagner himself bears testimony to the con- deration with which he was treated, and even later, when neir relations became strained, he still retained a warm eeling of personal esteem and friendship, which was fully eciprocated. For his wife, Ida von Lüttichau, he had a pecial regard, and he writes in the warmest terms of apprecia- on of the influence which she exerted over the theatrical ircles of Dresden. The natural delicacy which he felt in his

converse with the wife of his official superior placed a certain barrier between them, but she was a warm admirer of his art, especially of *Der Holländer*, and her fine poetic sense often availed to influence the higher powers in his favour. He afterwards dedicated the work to her.

Wagner's hesitation in accepting the post of *Kapellmeister* was amply justified by subsequent events. Within three months we find him complaining of the attitude of Lipinski, the leader of the orchestra, and others of its members. The ostensible cause of the dispute was his conducting of Gluck's *Armide*, but the real question was a much wider one. Wagner had set himself to reform much that he found amiss, not only in the organisation of the orchestra, but in its rendering of the classics. The Dresden orchestra, then the finest in Germany, proud of its traditions, resented such innovations on the part of a young conductor. This particular matter seems to have been speedily and amicably settled, but there always remained a party hostile to him in the orchestra. With the majority he was on excellent terms; his exceptional musical gift was beginning to assert itself, and his fine judgment and unerring taste in interpreting the works of the masters soon won the more musical among the executants and the public. An extant letter of von Lüttichau from this time expresses high appreciation of him as a conductor and affection for him as a friend. But the murmurings in the press continued. It is said that Reissiger was jealous of him; however this may be, a friend of Reissiger, Dr. Schladebach, who controlled all the reports on musical matters from Dresden, was unremitting in his denunciation of Wagner's conducting, especially of Mozart's operas.

Great as was Wagner's popularity with the public and with his own circle of musicians, the response of the leading musicians of the day was, at least, not enthusiastic. Berlioz was present in Dresden from February 7th to 19th, engaged in giving two concerts of his own compositions, in the preparations for which Wagner assisted. He attended performances of *Der Holländer* and of the second part of *Rienzi*. In his letter to Ernst in

aris, describing in his racy way the conditions existing in resden and Leipzig, he speaks appreciatively of Wagner's rvices to himself, but says very little about the two operas hich were creating such a stir. Schumann has often been ccused of want of candour in his attitude towards Wagner. e was at that time in Leipzig as editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift*, nen in the hey-day of its early fame and influence. Wagner as attracted to him by the double motive of personal iendliness to a brother musician whom he had known from is University days, and by a natural desire to enlist the pport of the leading musical journalist of Germany. One f his first visits on returning to Germany had been to chumann. At the time of the production of *Rienzi* Wagner peatedly wrote to Schumann, telling him the dates and ressing him to make the short journey and be present at one f the early representations. Considering that it was the ork of a rising young composer, considering too the immense ains which had been bestowed upon its preparation and the terest which it had awakened, this was surely not too much o expect from a professional critic who was at the same time fellow-townsman and an old friend. When Schumann ailed to appear, and at first seemed to take no notice in is paper of the event which all the musical world was alking about, Wagner wrote again complaining bitterly of uch treatment from a brother artist. A belated, but highly ppreciative article on *Rienzi* appeared in the paper in the November number of 1842. It was, as we now know, from the en of Ferdinand Heine. On January 27th, 1843, after the production of *Der Holländer*, seeing no prospect of inducing chumann to come to Dresden, Wagner sent him the score to ook at, asking him to return it within three days, since it was wanted for Berlin; but Schumann still took no notice of it, nd a fortnight later Wagner had to write again asking him rgently to send it back.

What was the reason of Schumann's coldness and indifference? No one who is familiar with his literary work nd knows the invariable generosity of his judgment upon

other artists would ascribe it to jealousy. Still, his conduct was, considering the position which he held, distinctly unfriendly. The explanation is probably to be sought in a certain timidity and hesitation in his character; he was constitutionally unable to make up his mind. Wagner undeniably bore the taint of Meyerbeer, whom he detested. His friend Mendelssohn, for whom he had an unbounded admiration, was not very favourably disposed towards Wagner; it is natural to suppose that he mistrusted the popular clamour; he was puzzled with Wagner, and wished to reserve his judgment until his mind was clearer about him.

Mendelssohn, from his intimate connection with Leipzig, must have been well acquainted with Wagner's early instrumental compositions. Towards *these* he was frankly unsympathetic, and he made no response to Wagner's advances. The elegant composer in kid gloves, the darling of early Victorian drawing-rooms, could have little in common with the elemental fires of the young titan. But jealousy was no part of his character, and he was far too good a musician himself not to recognise good music when he found it. Moritz Hauptmann, the great theoretician, teacher, dreamer and mystic, then *Kantor* of the Thomasschule, and intellectually the greatest who had filled that office since Bach, was by the habits of his mind disqualified from comprehension of Wagner's works. He represented the good classical school which acknowledged nothing later than Mozart and early Beethoven. Some of his utterances on Wagner sound strange at the present day, and seem to show an imperfect acquaintance with his works and with his artistic ideals.

Very different from the attitude of these musicians was that of the staunch old conservative, Ludwig Spohr, now nearly sixty, and established for more than twenty years as *Kapellmeister* at Cassel. He, too, was little in sympathy with the modern tendencies of music, but he had an open mind, and his appreciation of rising genius did not end in words. He was practically a stranger to Wagner, though he had probably met him in Dresden in the summer of 1842. After witnessing

performance of *Der Holländer* early in 1843 he expressed s opinion that Wagner was the most gifted composer then wing. He wrote for the loan of the score with a view to its erformance in Cassel, and produced it there on June 5th. t almost the same time the same work was also performed Riga under the bâton of Wagner's former friend, Heinrich orn, and met with a splendid success. It is worth noting that ne work chosen in both cases was not *Rienzi* but *Der Holländer*, hich so far had aroused little enthusiasm in Dresden. For ne moment these two, Cassel and Riga, were the only theatres hich took the work in hand. Berlin still waited. Leipzig nored his existence.

Several choral compositions belong to this period. On une 7th, 1843, the twenty-eighth anniversary of the return f King Friedrich August I. to Saxony was celebrated by the nveiling of a statue of that monarch and a grand pageant, r which Wagner and Mendelssohn were each commanded by ne King to compose some music. Wagner's contribution was *Festgesang* for voices *a capella*.[1] It was performed in the winger, and prefaced by cannon salutes, flourishes of trumpets nd cheers as the King drove up. More important musically as a cantata or miniature oratorio written for the Dresden *iedertafel*, of which he had accepted the conductorship, ntitled *Das Liebesmahl der Apostel* for men's voices. It was erformed on June 6th under the dome of the Frauenkirche y a chorus of 1,200 voices rehearsed to the last pitch of erfection, with an orchestra of a hundred instruments. The omposition is a very fine one and is occasionally given at the resent day; it certainly deserves to survive. It relates to ne descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles assembled at entecost. Wagner, however, tells us that he was a little isappointed at the effect of so large a number of voices; he tained thenceforward a dislike for massed choirs. Another casional composition, entitled *Gruss seiner Treuen an Friedrich ugust den Geliebten*, belongs to the following year. It was erformed on August 12th, 1844.

[1] He subsequently added an instrumental part. Both versions are included the complete edition of his works by Breitkopf u. Härtel.

Wagner's wish was to continue his work as a dramatic composer; his appointment as conductor he only valued as subservient to that end, and after receiving it he at once set to work on the libretto of a new opera entitled *Der Venusberg*, which had been occupying his mind ever since he read the "Volksbuch" in Paris. The composition and production of this work, afterwards known as *Tannhäuser*, was his main occupation during the years 1843–45. The music was commenced in November, 1843. This period was one of the happiest of his life; he continued his official duties and, full of hope as ever, made efforts to publish the *Holländer* and the *Liebesmal*, but without success. It is a strange reflection on the taste of the German public at that time that publishers were willing to undertake obscure French and Italian operas, but would venture nothing on the far better work of a fellow-countryman. Proposals for the performance of his operas came in from various theatres, from Hamburg, Prague, Danzig, Coburg and Leipzig; Vienna even called for an opera to be expressly composed for the Kärnthnerthor Theater. Negotiations with Berlin continued their weary course; it was not until the Opera-House was burnt down on the night of August 18th to 19th and the capital was left without a suitable stage that the *Holländer* was taken in hand in earnest. On January 7th, 1844, it was at last given at the smaller *Schauspielhaus*. Wagner went thither to superintend the last rehearsals and conduct two performances. During the first act the public was cold, but as the work proceeded the enthusiasm rose to a pitch which rivalled even that of Dresden for *Rienzi*. Mendelssohn was present on the first evening in a private box in his capacity as Director-General of Music; after the performance he came on to the stage, embraced the composer and congratulated him warmly.[1] Of the performance itself Wagner says when writing

[1] This incident, attested by Wagner himself, completely exonerates Mendelssohn from the charge, so freely brought against him, of having throughout been actively hostile to Wagner through jealousy. Von Bülow (*Briefe und Schriften*, iii. 21) speaks of the hearty words of congratulation which at a later time Mendelssohn addressed to Wagner after a performance of *Tannhäuser*.

o his wife on the next morning that it was "transportingly eautiful—they all played and sang like gods." Again, however, ne work was severely handled by the press, Wagner's permanent nd unrelenting enemy throughout his life. Only one little-nown paper, the *Berliner Musikalische Zeitung*, had courage o champion the cause of the young composer, and paid for s temerity by extinction. It was edited by Karl Gaillard. s the result of the newspaper opposition the interest in the ork declined, and after four representations in Berlin it was ithdrawn. The Riga performances continued concurrently ith those in Berlin and ended with them. On March 21st *ienzi* was given in Hamburg, which had also suffered from a rrible fire in the preceding year. Wagner was present and onducted the performance.

The sudden collapse of his operas in the capitals after such promising beginning was a serious disaster, for in Germany ne larger stages, especially the Court theatres, set the fashion or the smaller ones, and we hear of no more representations or many years. Liszt had heard *Rienzi* on February 29th, nd from that time onwards was untiring in his propaganda or Wagner among his many friends in all parts of the world. otwithstanding his high admiration for Liszt personally, Vagner was little in sympathy with his artistic ideals; he nought Liszt's concessions to the popular taste excessive, and naintained a certain reserve in his intercourse with the *maestro*. ndeed, he describes Liszt's personality as "by nature foreign nd hostile" to his own; nevertheless, he could not but feel ouched and gratified by Liszt's unselfish exertions in his ehalf.

Wagner had for some time been in correspondence with is brother Albert, who was now engaged at Halle and was etting under irksome conditions. His daughter Johanna, ot yet sixteen, was developing musical and dramatic gifts hich gave promise of a brilliant career, a promise which was mply fulfilled in after years. In Dresden the principal female arts were taken by Madame Schröder-Devrient and a singer amed Henriette Wüst. Madame Devrient could do pretty

much as she liked, and as she was often away singing at other theatres, she could rarely be reckoned upon. A young singer was badly wanted to take her place when she failed, but it was not easy to find one with the necessary qualifications, and courageous enough to hold such a perilous position. The young Johanna seemed to fulfil all requirements. In fixing upon her Wagner was guided solely by the interests of the Dresden opera, not by those of his niece. In May she came to sing in Dresden on trial, with the result that she was engaged on a year's probation, the Dresden theatre paying the fine necessary to release her from her present engagement. She came with her father and settled there. She sang the part of "Irene" in *Rienzi* and enjoyed the inestimable advantage of studying the music of *Tannhäuser* scene by scene as it was composed with her uncle. At its production, when she was barely seventeen, she sang the part of "Elisabeth."

The post of *Musikdirektor*, which, as will be remembered, had fallen vacant in 1842, had not yet been definitely filled up. An ardent young admirer of Wagner, August Röckel, had been designated for the post, and was now serving his probationary year. Early in 1844 the question of his confirmation came up for settlement. He was strongly supported by Wagner, but von Lüttichau wished for a more experienced musician; he even went so far as to hint that the King was not altogether satisfied with Wagner's own performance. Probably nothing more was meant than that the King had grumbled at his preference for German over Italian operas, but as he had explicitly undertaken the post of conductor on the understanding that he would resign it in the event of his losing the confidence of his superiors he could not now do less than send in his resignation. At the same time he asked that his services might be retained on a lower salary for conducting his own operas and for performing such occasional duties as might be entrusted to him. The matter, of course, blew over; his resignation was not accepted, and Röckel's appointment was confirmed. In itself the episode was of little moment, but it marked the beginning of a rift between himself and his superiors which

rew wider as time went on. Another source of disagreement rose from a proposal for bringing over the mortal remains f Karl Maria von Weber for interment in his own country. Weber had died eighteen years before in London, whither he ad gone to bring out his last opera, *Oberon*, composed for ovent Garden at the invitation of Charles Kemble to an nglish libretto by an English poet, J. R. Planché,[1] and was uried in Moorfields Chapel. Von Lüttichau held it to be his uty to oppose the movement from fear of creating a precedent. With strange reasoning he argued that if such an honour were o be accorded to Weber, a similar honour might be claimed or any other conductor, such as Morlacchi or Reissiger, who ad served for a much longer time than Weber! The Court, too, ad scruples on religious grounds against disturbing the body. n the other hand, the movement was strongly supported by ne public throughout Germany. Meyerbeer, Weber's fellow-udent in their earlier days, instituted a special performance f *Euryanthe* in Berlin to raise the needful funds; other theatres llowed the example of Berlin, and all opposition was swept way. Arrangements having been made with the English uthorities through the intermediary of Weber's elder son, Iax, then in London, the body was exhumed and brought o Dresden by river from Hamburg, arriving in the middle f December. We possess a full account of the ceremony y Wagner himself; he was chosen to deliver the oration nd to compose the music, which consisted of processional usic on motives from Weber's *Euryanthe* and a choral mposition of his own.[2] Unhappily a cloud was cast over the roceedings by the death of Weber's younger son, Alexander, short time before.

For a successful propaganda beyond the limits of Dresden

[1] I think it worth while to mention these well-known details, because is—or at least used to be—the custom to give numbers from this English pera in German, in what Hauptmann has called "the shockingly bad transla-ion of Theodor Hell" which barely two per cent. of the audience can nderstand. Nothing could show more convincingly how far we are in England om realising Wagner's ideals.

[2] Vol. xvi. of Breitkopf und Härtel's edition.

it became imperative that his operas should be printed and published, if not yet in full orchestral score, at least in arrangements for piano and voice. He applied to Breitkopf und Härtel in Leipzig to publish the two operas, but no agreement was reached, and he finally decided to publish at his own risk and expense. He agreed with a modest publisher of Dresden named Meser to issue arrangements of both operas and sell them on his account, receiving a royalty of ten per cent. on the net profits. To obtain the funds necessary for meeting the cost of printing and publishing Wagner appealed to Madame Schröder-Devrient, who agreed "as a matter of course" to advance the sum required. But she had reckoned without her fiancé, who controlled all her affairs. He refused to allow the loan, and the whole transaction collapsed. Wagner was left to pay the cost himself, and was thus saddled with a new burden to his financial embarrassments.

The music of *Tannhäuser* was completed in the last days of 1844; there yet remained the orchestration. The only time which he had for composition was in the intervals of his official duties; but he was treated with every consideration, and von Lüttichau promised him a representation of his opera when it should be ready. The only incident remaining to be recorded in the year is a visit towards its end of Spontini. The famous *maestro* was chafing under the feeling of having been supplanted in Berlin by "ces deux Juifs errants" (Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn), and the Dresden authorities, wishing to pay him a compliment, rather incautiously invited him to conduct a performance of *La Vestale*. The account of his visit is one of the most entertaining of Wagner's essays in light literature.[1]

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, v. 86.

CHAPTER X

DRESDEN (*continued*)

WAGNER'S situation at this period of his career is representative for all his life: the press, almost without exception, in arms against him; the public strongly inclined in his favour, but doubtful of itself, and much influenced by the attacks of the journalists; behind these a little group of enthusiastic supporters, counting amongst their ranks many of the best elements of German intellectualism, ready to fight for the good cause of pure and healthy art against envy and Philistinism. This resolute band was for the present confined to the local musicians and a few outsiders, but a little later it included such men as Liszt, Hans von Bülow, Tausig, Hans Richter, and many more whose names will occur to everybody. Wagner's final success—in so far as it was actually a success—was due to his own genius, to his indomitable perseverance and courage, his uncompromising earnestness; but it should be recognised that no artist of first rank ever owed a greater debt to his supporters than Wagner; without their aid he must inevitably have succumbed to the forces arrayed against him.

Wagner's own account of his attitude towards his environment during the period of the composition of *Tannhäuser* is sufficiently instructive to be worth reproducing. Unfortunately, he has here adopted the involved and verbose style usual with him when enlarging upon the state of his soul, and I can only render the passage intelligibly with the aid of drastic paraphrase and condensation, preserving the sense rather than the words of the original:

> The happy change in my circumstances and the hopes which it awakened, the intoxicating effect of contact with new and

> favourable conditions, brought with it a craving for enjoyment, and led my mind in a direction very different from that which was more naturally its own, and had been acquired under the struggles and privations of the past. . . . I could only have satisfied this new craving by completely subordinating my own true nature as an artist to the dictates of the public taste; I should have had to resign myself to fashion, to speculate on its foibles, and I fully realised that on such a course I should perish with disgust. Pleasures of the senses and enjoyment of life (*Sinnlichkeit*[1] *und Lebensgenuss*) presented themselves to my mind in the forms in which they are understood *by the modern world;* in art they seemed only realisable by exploiting the miserable conditions of modern artistic public life. . . . It was the strength of my artistic and human individuality which led me back from these paths and caused me to yearn for a higher and nobler artistic goal, to turn from the sensuous enjoyments offered by the life around me to seek a pure, chaste, virgin love—a love intangible and unapproachable, sprung from the soil of fullest sensuousness (*Sinnlichkeit*), but which sensuousness as understood in modern society could not satisfy.[2]

The important passage thus paraphrased should be read in the original by all who are able to master its intricacies. It throws a light upon Wagner's character, and goes far to explain both the violent hatred and the devoted love which he inspired. Too young as yet, and too ambitious to be stirred by the religious impulses which acted so strongly on his later life, but responsive to every human motive, ardent and impulsive to excess, liable to be led away by every passing stimulus, even that of fashion which he despised, his passions were yet under the restraint of the far more potent influence

[1] I again find myself in a difficulty with the word "sinnlich"—Plato's *αἰσθητός* opposed to *λογιστικός*. I have in the course of this work variously translated it by "sensuous" or "sensible," not as a rule by "sensual" (though it may mean that too). Every art contains both elements; in music the sensible, that is the actual pleasure of the sense-organ, the ear, predominates; in poetry the intellectual or logical. I am not concerned to show that Wagner always used words with technical accuracy, but only to render his meaning. He explains his use of the word in the Introductions to Vols. v. and vi. of his Collected Works.

[2] *Ges. Schr.*, iv. 278.

of artistic and moral[1] rectitude. It is essential to note the stress which he lays upon the sensuous element in art, because many are apt to think that an artist who is perpetually dreaming and theorising about his art, as Wagner was, is indifferent to the impression which it makes upon the senses, or treats of it contemptuously, as belonging to an inferior order. Wagner requires that the senses shall co-operate equally with the other activities of the mind. Feuerbach, the influence of whose writings was so strong with him at that time, expressly claims it as a point in favour of his philosophy of the future that instead of despising the senses it establishes them in their rightful position. The passage also emphasises a doctrine which was always before his mind, that of the intimate connection between art and life. The struggle here indicated forms the theme of *Tannhäuser*. It is embodied dramatically in the figures of Venus and Elizabeth, logically in the tournament in the lays of Tannhäuser and of Wolfram.

Regarding his method of composing, a passage from a letter to K. Gaillard is of interest :

> I do not choose a subject, bring it into verse and then consider how to add suitable music. Such a method would involve the impossible task of having to work up enthusiasm twice over. My way of production is quite different. To begin with, no subject-matter attracts me which does not present itself equally in its poetical and its musical aspects. Before I begin to write a verse or to construct a scene I am intoxicated (*berauscht*) by the musical fragrance of my creation ; all the characteristic motives are already in my head, so that when the verses come to be written and the scenes arranged the opera itself is, for me, already complete ; the working out of the musical details is afterwards a matter for calm and leisurely reflection ; the moment of actual production is then past.[2]

We see foreshadowed in this passage his future method of

[1] I use this word, here and throughout, not in the popular sense, but in the philosophical sense of Aristotle and others, to denote the ethical principles which govern the actions of men. It has nothing to do with what is called morality in ordinary modern life, that is obedience to social conventions. The moral law, which Kant likened to the starry heavens in its infinite beauty, is not made by the Registrar or the Priest, nor by Act of Parliament.

[2] January 30th, 1844. Kapp und Kastner, ii., p. 106.

working. He did not build up the drama scene by scene; it rather *dawned* upon him "out of the spirit of music," shaping itself gradually into dramatic form and splendour. His head was now full of projects; he sketched mentally more subjects than he could ever hope to complete. In the meagre intervals of leisure which his official duties afforded he delighted in lonely walks, reflecting on his art-work, discussing with himself fundamental principles of the drama and the practical details of its construction. He suffered acutely from dyspepsia and wrote long letters, obviously craving for sympathy and criticism from other persons concerned with the same problems as himself. From his wife he could derive little help; she was basking in the sunshine of his success; her happy and pliable nature, content with the sweets of daily life equally when starving in Paris and when shining among the brilliant surroundings of Dresden, was incapable of following the daring flights of his ambition. *Rienzi* had made his fortune; why then should he not continue to write *Rienzis* and prosper?—such was her reasoning.

We are apt to become impatient with Wagner's habit of exposing himself bare and naked before the world, and perhaps it would have been better for us if he—or his editors—had observed more reticence with regard to his mental phases. But let us understand him rightly. Wagner's writings, especially his letters, which were not written for publication, are frequently conversations with himself; he expands his view in writing in order to clear and test them. With him the moral question dominated every other; he was not content to allow his mighty gifts free play, to leave them to run riot without control or purpose, to practise "art for art's sake." He viewed genius as a thing worthless in itself; intellectual gifts were to him a high responsibility, and could be employed either for good or for evil; it behoved their possessor to search his own heart, to be clear within himself about his own ultimate purpose; whether he would use them in the cause of genuine art, of truth and eternal beauty, or whether to promulgate the fashionable lies of society. Other poets might enlarge upon "freedom";

a Mozart might glorify the lives of libertines ; but a Beethoven could not have composed such a subject as *Don Giovanni*.[1] At present he was feeling his way, but he was on the right path. As with the Athenian tragedians, the *incidents* of the drama are only the framework for exhibiting the play of moral forces. In the *Holländer* his text was the redeeming power of a woman's love. *Tannhäuser* is not a story of the adventures of a young and dissolute knight, but the eternal one of the choice between pure and sensual love, between Aphrodite of Heaven and her of the slums, the theme of philosophers and poets from the beginning of thought down to our own most modern times.

While thus concentrating upon his own thoughts he was not neglectful of the productions of other minds. It has often been asserted that Wagner was so self-centred, so absorbed in the contemplation of his own personal ideals that he had little sense for the work of other artists. This is true of many men of genius, but of Wagner it would be impossible to assert anything more contrary to the truth. It is one of the many fallacies spread abroad by the malice of his enemies in the press, and still clung to by an ill-informed public. In fact, nothing is more remarkable than the way in which Wagner, from the day in which he attained a position of responsibility exerted himself to bring out new works of merit by his contemporaries, and to revive others which had fallen into oblivion. In Dresden this was indeed a part of his regular official duty, but how many *Hofkapellmeister* would make the cause of others their own and throw themselves into the work of rival composers with the ardour and enthusiasm of Wagner ? It is true that his taste was exacting ; he rejected much that was generally acclaimed at the time, but the fine sense which he showed in detecting what was genuine and worthy to live is no less admirable than the disinterested geniality with which he identified himself with the work which he had taken in hand, frequently putting aside his own compositions

[1] See an article on Beethoven by the late Edward Dannreuther in *Macmillan's Magazine* for July, 1876.

for the sake of bringing forward those of another artist. Nor did he confine himself to his friends, or to those who could reciprocate his services. Marschner was rather hostile to him; his *Hans Heiling*—to this day deservedly a favourite in every German opera-house—had long lain neglected in Dresden; it was Wagner who rescued it from oblivion. He also brought out the same composer's *Adolf von Nassau*, and exerted himself for Spohr's *Kreuzfahrer*. Of older works he revived Palestrina's *Stabat Mater*, Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, not then as it is now a stock piece of every large orchestra, but neglected, forgotten and generally condemned as a work of the composer's old age and decadence. An obscure composer in Naumburg, named Otto Claudius, had submitted to the Dresden Opera-house a work which was rejected. All that Wagner's official duties required of him was, after having examined the work, to return it as unsuitable, and this, as he knew too well from his own experience, is all that most men in his position would have done. But he had detected merit in the work; he therefore wrote the composer a long letter criticising it minutely, pointing out where the defects lay and how they could be remedied. It is pleasant to read that his suggestions were accepted by the composer and the opera was actually produced with the amendments suggested, though not till forty years later.

Wagner speaks of the profound mental depression under which he completed the score of *Tannhäuser* in April, 1845. He felt as if with this work he had signed his own death-warrant, and that the modern principles of society were for him impossible. But the struggle was really over; his better self had returned to him, and he threw himself into the work of production with his usual energy and hopefulness. The fact that so many highly-gifted men—Fischer, Heine, Röckel—holding responsible posts at the Dresden theatre, were his enthusiastic supporters was an inestimable advantage. The piano arrangements of *Rienzi* and *Der Holländer* had been made respectively by a certain Klink and by Röckel; that of *Tannhäuser* by himself was added to them and was published

in a quasi-medieval dress with a sort of Gothic type specially cast for the purpose—all at his own expense. These, however, were not enough; the theatres wanted scores, so at the same time 100 copies of the full score of *Tannhäuser* and 25 of each of the two others were printed by a special process. Thus set up, he was able to distribute copies in interested quarters. Tired with the exertions of a strenuous season he retired at the beginning of July to Marienbad, intending there to rest and read. He was ordered complete abstention from work; he read Wolfram von Eschenbach and Gervinus' *History of German Poetry*. Wagner was never scared by ponderous erudition; from the dull pages of the latter work he could still draw inspiration. He was immensely entertained by the account of the Meistersingers of the sixteenth century, especially with the figure of the "Marker."[1] It occurred to him that a comic opera would be a welcome relief to the severe tragedy of his other works; defying the doctor, he sketched a play entitled *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. With this he tells us he hoped to banish the spectre of Lohengrin which was haunting him; but in vain. "Scarcely," he continues, "had I entered my midday bath than I was seized with a longing to write the sketch. My bath should have lasted an hour, but I could not wait; after a few minutes I sprang out of it impatiently, hurried on my clothes, ran like a madman to my lodgings, and brought Lohengrin to paper." It was perhaps natural that under such circumstances the doctor advised him to discontinue his course of bathing. He returned to Dresden in the middle of August with both sketches completed. His friends were surprised at his cheerful demeanour. "For myself," he says, "I felt as if I had wings."

The rehearsals for *Tannhäuser* began early in September. The leading part was taken by Tichatschek, "Wolfram" by Mitterwurzer, "Elisabeth" by Johanna Wagner, "Venus" by Madame Schröder-Devrient. Johanna, it was evident from the first, would be a splendid success, except in the last act,

[1] This fact, related in his *Autobiography*, completely disposes of the later fable that by the *Merker* he intended to signalize his critic Hanslick, whom he now met for the first time as an ardent youth and admirer of *Rienzi* and the *Holländer*.

where her youth and lack of any real life-experience were a disadvantage. The others were less satisfactory; Madame Devrient could make nothing out of her part, and only consented to undertake it out of friendship for the composer, and a desire not to spoil the game. She was past her prime, and her matronly figure was ill-suited to the graceful goddess of youthful femininity; as she humorously expressed herself: "I should have to be dressed in tricot from head to foot, and you can't expect that from a woman like me!" Tichatschek, in spite of his fine voice and exceptional musical gifts, could not adapt himself to his rôle. Joyful and buoyant by nature, he was unfitted for tragedy, "his voice had not a single accent of real pain or suffering."

The first performance of *Tannhäuser* was on October 19th, before a crowded house. It had been much talked about, and many had come from other parts of Germany to hear the new work. But the result on the whole was not satisfactory. Tichatschek was hoarse and was otherwise disappointing, he was a poor actor, and was unable to throw off operatic traditions. Moreover, like so many men of high gifts, he was incapable of learning. The Venus scenes, through the genius of Madame Schröder-Devrient, went better than had been expected, but the scenery was badly contrived. Further, Wagner thought he had detected certain weaknesses in the design of the work. Added to all this was the non-arrival of the scenery for the second act, the hall in the Wartburg, which had been specially ordered from Paris in accordance with the detailed designs of the composer; they had as a makeshift to put up with scenery intended for the hall of Charlemagne in *Oberon*, which happened to be at hand. The reception of the work by the public was not very warm. Wagner remarks bitterly that what pleased the audience best were the numbers in regular operatic form—the song to Venus, the reception of the guests, the address to the evening star, the pilgrims' chorus, etc., whereas the scene, dramatically so impressive, where Tannhäuser relates the story of his pilgrimage, fell altogether flat; it was viewed as an operatic recitative, and condemned

as long and wearisome. Owing to Tichatschek's indisposition the work could not be repeated before the 27th ; in the meantime the missing scenery had arrived and some alterations had been made in the score to suit the singers ; but the house was disappointingly empty. It was not until the third performance, three days later, that the work came into its rights.

Discouraging as were the first results, the new work was the means of gaining for him warm friends. Karl Gaillard, the journalist, who had already championed him in the press, had now come from Berlin for the performance, and Wagner made his personal acquaintance. A new and valuable friend who also came for the occasion was Alwine Frommann, the sister of a Leipzig publisher, who held the post of Reader (Vorleserin) to the Princess of Prussia, afterwards Empress Augusta. She had written to Wagner and received a letter in reply on the occasion of the performance of *Der Holländer* in Berlin, and was now introduced to him by Madame Devrient. She became his warm friend and enthusiastic admirer, and through her position at the Court of Berlin was often able to render him important services. Another lady who was in Dresden for the performance, and was from this time onwards during the whole of her long life one of Wagner's most influential and active propagandists, came from very different circles. Marie Countess Kalergis, *née* Nesselrode, niece of the famous statesman, in whose house she was fostered, was introduced to him by Lipinski, the leader of the orchestra. She is described as by descent a German, by education a Russian, by marriage a Greek, and by birth and political sentiment a Pole. The friend and trusted confidante of kings and statesmen, herself the centre of an influential diplomatic circle, her whole heart was really in art. She was herself a musician of the very highest attainments, the pupil of Chopin, rivalled by Liszt alone in her rendering of the works of that master. Liszt, who referred to her as the good fairy of his life, described her playing in these words : " Elle jouait comme personne, et ceux qui l'ont entendue n'oublieront jamais son jeu, ou pour mieux

dire, son interprétation unique."[1] At the time at which we have arrived her career was only beginning, but later, as Madame Mouchanoff-Kalergis, she played a great part in Wagner's life, and was able to render the most valuable services to the cause of his art. Her portrait by Lenbach shows strong features combined with feminine softness, and the strange expression of sympathy with, and at the same time aloofness from, the affairs of this world so often noticeable in strong personalities.

Amongst the upper classes of Dresden Wagner had no reason to complain of neglect; he was invited to their parties, and no doubt enjoyed them, especially on his wife's account, and because he there met foreign artists with whom he would not otherwise have come into contact. But there is no indication of any genuine response to his artistic endeavours on the part of society; he was merely the fashionable lion of the day. Individual exceptions there were; Frau Ida von Lüttichau has already been mentioned. Another highly-placed lady who showed genuine understanding for his art and sympathy with his aims was the wife of Kammerherr von Könneritz. Since the days of *Rienzi* she had been his most devoted admirer, and she remained staunch in her allegiance while he was in Dresden. The friendship of these two distinguished ladies sustained him amid the cabals and intrigues of the Dresden operatic circles. Intellectual stimulus, or intercourse with his peers, Dresden could scarcely provide. He saw much of Schumann; they went for walks together in the country around, but the distance between them was too great for there to be any real community of ideas. Schumann, reserved, wrapped in himself and silent, was a damper to his eager, communicative companion. Ferdinand Hiller, then just rising into fame as a composer, was another member of his more immediate circle; he too, like Schumann, had his own

[1] The reader may compare with these words of Liszt the account of her by Sir Fred. St. John, who knew her in 1858, when she was 35. He says: "I never felt so awed by any woman."—*Reminiscences of a Retired Diplomat*, p. 40. Her biography by Constantin Photiadès has recently been published in Paris (Librairie Plon., 1924).

ends to follow. Equally unresponsive, often antagonistic, but far more widely cultured and congenial, was an ex-journalist named Dr. Hermann Franck, who after a short experience as editor of a large paper had retired in disgust from his profession and was now settled in Saxony. Dresden was then in the heyday of its prosperity, and many of the first artists of Germany—Rietschel the sculptor, Semper the architect of the modern town, von Schwind, and many more of fame beyond the limits of Saxony—were to be met with at the "Monday Society," of which Wagner was a regular member. "None of us thought much of the others," he says. Dr. Anton Pusinelli was a medical practitioner and an active member of the *Liedertafel*, of which Wagner was the conductor. He was attracted to Wagner from the first, and remained his faithful friend until his death in 1878. Although they were little together in after years, it was perhaps the truest and most enduring friendship of his life. Before the select circle of the "Monday Society" on November 17th, 1845, Wagner read his completed libretto of *Lohengrin*. Some of the first impressions recorded are very curious. Schumann could not conceive how such a text could ever be set to music. Laube remarked that it brought with it a musical atmosphere. Taubert of Berlin would have liked to compose the music to it himself. Hiller spoke very highly of the work considered merely as a drama, but thought it a pity that Wagner should insist upon composing the music himself, his musical talent being so inadequate! Doctor Franck, though also much impressed, demonstrated so convincingly that the hero was an utterly cold and unsympathetic figure that Wagner was on the point of altering the plan to bring a happy ending. Its fate was decided by Frau von Lüttichau, to whom he had submitted the remarks of his critic. Her reply was to the point and emphatic, that a man must be utterly devoid of all feeling for poetry to think that *Lohengrin* could end otherwise than it did. After that he happily gave up the idea of tampering with his text.

Towards the end of the year Wagner was in Berlin; it

was probably on this occasion that he asked permission to dedicate *Tannhäuser* to the King (Friedrich Wilhelm IV.), and received in reply a request to arrange some of the numbers for military band that his Majesty might hear them on parade. "My humiliation," he says, "could scarcely have been deeper."

It was the practice in Dresden on Palm Sunday for the orchestra to give a performance in the large Old Theatre (not the Court Opera-house built by Semper in 1841) for the benefit of the widows and orphans of its deceased members. In the year 1846 the programme consisted of an oratorio and a symphony, and it fell to Wagner to conduct the latter. He selected the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven. The work was as good as unknown in Dresden and was in bad repute. Eight years before it had been given under Reissiger's conductorship and had completely failed. Wagner's choice consequently met with the most determined opposition from the orchestra. They would have none of it; they declared the proposal to be an offence against the "honour" of the orchestra; they predicted an empty house, and financial ruin to their fund, and sent a deputation to von Lüttichau urging him to use his authority and prohibit the performance. Wagner, however, insisted and endeavoured his utmost to render the work as perfectly as possible. Structural alterations were made in the building to enable the instruments to be properly placed; the Symphony was mercilessly rehearsed, portion by portion, Wagner himself conducting without the score to the astonishment of everybody. Some idea may be formed of the thoroughness of his measures from the fact that twelve separate rehearsals were devoted exclusively to the recitatives of violoncellos and basses which introduce the choral part. As the work grew under his direction ever new and hitherto unsuspected beauties emerged; the orchestra began to reconsider its judgment and to change its attitude; some of its members even formally recanted. The concert on April 5th was an event in the history of Dresden music. It was an unqualified success; the theatre was crowded; the

receipts were far higher than they had ever been before; the symphony was saved. It was repeated in the following year and again in 1849. Later, under his successor Krebs, the orchestra reversed its former attitude and insisted upon Wagner's *tempi* being retained. He was warmly complimented on his success and on the new light which his interpretation had cast upon the work by no one more than by his *quondam* opponents. Among those who offered their congratulations was Niels Gade, just then rising into fame under the auspices of Mendelssohn, and engaged to conduct the *Gewandhaus* concerts in Leipzig. The world has not yet realised what it owes to Wagner's untiring propaganda for Beethoven. At the present day, when the works of Beethoven's so-called latest style, the last sonatas and quartets, the Mass in D and the Ninth Symphony, are universally recognised as the "greatest art-work of any nation of any epoch," when a man who spoke slightingly of them would imperil his musical reputation, it is difficult to conceive how entirely they had fallen into discredit after the composer's death. It is not too much to say that our present appreciation of these stupendous creations is mainly due to Wagner and to the little band of artists who attached themselves to him and were trained under his tuition. There were, indeed, even then some who could delight in the sonatas and the quartets, and in Paris, as we have seen, thanks to the undaunted determination and perseverance of one man—Habeneck—the symphony was admirably performed and understood; but these concerts were confined to a small and very select circle of intellectuals. It was Wagner who revealed the later Beethoven to the German public, and through it to the world. He first saw what was needed—a performance correct and adequate in every particular, only to be attained by unflagging industry in rehearsal, in the closest study of every minute detail of phrasing, of dynamical *nuance* and of *tempo*, under a competent, warm-hearted and inspiring conductor, who was himself in sympathy with the composer. The foundation of his propaganda was laid at this memorable concert in Dresden in 1846. And

on Wagner himself his success in having overcome so many difficulties and discouragements proved a healthy and much-needed stimulus. His debts, the all but universal opposition of the leaders of public opinion, their total failure to follow him in his artistic aims, the malicious detraction sedulously encouraged and spread by his enemies, had brought him well-nigh to despair. This concert revived his confidence in himself; he felt that his success had been fairly earned, that his labours had not been in vain. Only the press continued to rage.

As the years passed it became more and more evident that Wagner's work in Dresden, so far as the advancement of his compositions was concerned, had been a failure. *Rienzi* still held its own, but the *Holländer* and *Tannhäuser* had not met with any success, while in other capitals the notice taken of them was slight. In Cassel Spohr's proposal to put *Tannhäuser* on the repertoire was vetoed by the ruling prince. The sanguine hopes which Wagner had built on achieving a brilliant success were dashed; the bold publishing schemes which were to have brought him fortune and fame had landed him in ruin; there were no sales, and the publisher, Meser, was himself in straits for money. The crisis in Wagner's affairs was—it is sad to relate—brought about by Madame Schröder-Devrient. It was his own familiar friend, she who had once relieved his distress "as a matter of course," who had stood by him with help and encouragement, who now placed her reckoning in the hands of a lawyer for recovery of his debt to her, as if with the deliberate intention of ruining him. What impelled her to this cruel act is not clear; according to Wagner she was jealous of his niece, Johanna. Her own powers were now beginning to fail, and she was notoriously piqued at Wagner having brought a younger rival to Dresden. Those who have any knowledge of the psychology of a *prima donna* will not altogether reject such a possibility but a more charitable and more probable explanation may be sought in the fact that she was now on the eve of her marriage with the scoundrel von Döring, and that she acted under compulsion from him.

Wagner was saved from the ignominy of bankruptcy by an advance from the theatre pension fund. From this time onward he lived very much in retirement, carrying on his official duties, and with little interest in the affairs of the *Hoftheater;* the only friend with whom he associated was August Röckel, who clung to him with unswerving fidelity. In order to reduce his expenses he moved his residence to a smaller flat in the less central Friedrichsstadt, in an upper story of the so-called Marcolini Palace. Early in 1846 he had submitted elaborate proposals for the reconstruction of the royal orchestra, in a very able document in which every detail of the institution, down to the pattern of the desks and chairs, is minutely discussed.[1] The additional cost to the budget would, as he showed, be trifling, and could be defrayed by reduction in the inflated remunerations paid to singers, which were even then becoming a scandal in German theatres. Here he touches upon another evil of the opera. Under the existing system the singer, male or female, often without any other qualification than a beautiful voice, is permitted, not only to dominate the entire performance, to dictate to the management, and even to the composer, but to extort an exorbitant income to be squandered on extravagant luxury and in the gratification of personal vanity; while the humble orchestral player, generally the superior of the singer in every way—in musical gift, in artistic feeling, in general culture, in sense of duty—performs his task unnoticed, content with a bare subsistence wage, and happy if by effacing himself he can contribute his share to the perfection of the whole. The rejection of his proposals after nearly a year's consideration wounded him deeply. This was just at the time of his worst financial straits. A ray of hope seemed to shine from Berlin. The King of Prussia showed some interest in his work and attended performances of *Rienzi* and *Tannhäuser* in Dresden. A signal success in the Prussian capital would re-establish his affairs. *Rienzi* was at last put upon the stage in Berlin,

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, xii. 149.

whither Wagner himself proceeded in 1847 to superintend the rehearsals and to conduct the first performances. It was to have been given as a special compliment to the King on his birthday on October 15th, but had to be put off to the 24th, and the King was not present. The second representation, however, was attended by the Prince of Prussia and the Princess Augusta. Wagner's endeavours while in the Prussian capital to obtain an audience of the King led to nothing. He had gone there expressly with the hope of inducing him to command the production of *Lohengrin* at his own Opera-house, but returned to Dresden with nothing accomplished; even his expenses were rather shabbily refused on a mere technical quibble. The conditions in Berlin were not very favourable to a young composer. Mendelssohn and Spontini were no longer at the head; the King, though well-intentioned, was too unstable and too feeble-minded to have much influence; and the public, left without guidance, was bewildered amid the new developments. There remained, however, from *Der Holländer* a small knot, of whom the most influential was Professor Werder of the Berlin University. His warm and unswerving support was of great service to Wagner in later years.

During these years of retirement, and while engaged on the composition of *Lohengrin*, he read assiduously, especially making a close study of classical authors—Æschylus, Aristophanes and Plato. His fancy was engaged by the wonderful beauty of Greek life depicted in Plato's *Symposium*. He studied historical works and deepened his knowledge of medieval German legend with the aid of Mone and Grimm. Three months of the summer of 1846 he spent at Gross Graupe, a few miles out of Dresden, whence in June he went for a short trip to Leipzig to meet Spohr—the first and only time that they ever really met. While in Gross Graupe he received a visit from a boy at school in the Dresden Gymnasium. He told Wagner that he was intended for the law, and that he and two of his school friends had been present at the performances of all his operas from *Rienzi* onwards, and had followed them with increasing enthusiasm. As he was now leaving Dresden

to complete his education elsewhere he asked Wagner to write something in his album. His name was Hans von Bülow, and his two friends were Karl and Alexander Ritter.

In Gross Graupe the music to *Lohengrin* was sketched. The composition was begun in Dresden on September 9th of the same year; he began with the third act, which occupied him for six months. This act was in a sense the centre of the whole; the principal motives are collected together in Lohengrin's account of his mission, and he wished to consolidate them in his own mind before proceeding to the earlier portions which lead up to it. These were quickly composed in the early summer of 1847, and the prelude completed the whole on August 28th of that year. The orchestral score was not ready until the end of March, 1848.

In the beginning of 1847 Gutzkow,[1] a novelist and dramatist of great fame in his own day, had been appointed *Dramaturg* to the Dresden theatre. He was a friend of Laube, and his successor as the leader of the "Young Germans." The time just before the revolutionary epoch of 1848–49 was one of intellectual ferment very similar to that which we have seen in our own day preceding the Great War. Then, as now, it showed itself in all kinds of eccentricities—artistic, literary and social—and especially in a general desire to tear away all social conventions. With these tendencies Wagner had nothing whatever in common, and the antagonism between him and the new official when he began to interfere in musical matters which lay beyond his province and of which he knew nothing soon ripened into a deadly feud. Wagner's relations with the authorities were becoming daily more and more strained. Von Lüttichau continued to treat him with great consideration in spite of the want of interest which he showed in the affairs of the theatre. He allowed him leave to give him leisure to compose, and did all that was compatible with his

[1] Dramaturg in Dresden 1846–61. Hs must not be judged from the accounts of him in the Wagner literature; he was in every way the direct opposite of Wagner. He is more important as a reformer than as a dramatist, and left a decided impress upon the drama of his epoch.

official duty. But it was impossible to ignore the difficulties of his position. Wagner was not easy to deal with as a subordinate; his habit of sulking when things were not done according to his mind was wanting in loyalty, and the situation was aggravated by his debts, which were becoming the talk of the town. It was the appointment of Gutzkow which at last led to an open breach. On July 9th Wagner wrote a very intemperate letter regarding Gutzkow. He had already absented himself from the committee meetings, and now spoke of resigning his post as conductor if only he could free himself from his debts. Von Lüttichau reported unfavourably of him to the King, as having had his head turned by flattery, and having an exaggerated opinion of his own talents. This last charge was perhaps scarcely true, as we now know, but it was made in good faith, and only expressed the opinion of nearly everybody in Dresden. In reporting thus upon him the *Intendant* was performing an obvious duty; he could scarcely have said less than he did, but it has brought upon him the wrath and hatred of Wagner's followers. The very name of von Lüttichau is abominable to these intolerant partisans; Glasenapp bestows upon it such epithets as "perfidious" and "dishonourable," and devotes three pages to besmirching the memory of an honourable man. The letter has been published by Prölss from the records of the Dresden Court Theatre, and is reproduced by Glasenapp;[1] it is therefore accessible to everyone; it is severe, but an impartial judgment must admit that with the exception that I have mentioned every word of it is true, and under the circumstances justifiable. It is clear that Wagner, carried away by his impetuous energy, was trying to override his official superiors, a proceeding which cannot be tolerated in any public institution if it is to continue to exist. In accordance probably with official etiquette von Lüttichau showed the letter to Wagner, whose feelings on reading it may be imagined. At the same time, he tried to help him in the matter of his debts by procuring for him a

[1] Prölss *Beiträge z. Gesch. des Dresdner Hoftheaters*, p. 127; Glasenapp, ii., p. 217.

second advance of 300 thalers and an addition to his salary of 200 thalers, understood to be permanent, out of the yearly proceeds of the subscription concerts, strictly on the condition of his freeing himself from debt and regulating his affairs for the future, failing which he would be relieved of his duties. Wagner, of course, retained his post. The original cause of the dissatisfaction was the rejection of his proposals for reforming the orchestra. A little later, in 1849, he submitted a more comprehensive scheme, including the establishment of a national theatre in Saxony, and took it direct to the Ministry, *i.e.* over the head of his direct superior ; but the end was then near.

CHAPTER XI

ON LEITMOTIVE[1]

TANNHÄUSER contains at least one example of the perfected use of a musical phrase recalling a dramatic situation, and it will be as well before going further to consider the subject of the so-called *Leitmotive*, regarding which some misunderstanding seems to prevail, even among musicians. It is sometimes supposed that Wagner invented a new method of composition, by labelling material objects, things, persons, or perhaps situations and ideas, with musical phrases, so that you had to get up these labels to know what the music "meant." Lists have been made of all the *Leitmotive* in his works, endowed with fantastical names, and have been published at popular prices to be bought by the wandering public and studied along with their Baedekers. It was only necessary to commit these to memory to know all about Wagner's music. The mischief which these little booklets has caused is incalculable; you can learn no more about Wagner's art from them than you can learn of an architectural master-work by examining the bricks of which it is built. As the originator of these books was the editor of the *Bayreuther Blätter*, it has been supposed that they were published by Wagner's authority, or, at least, that he gave them his approval. This is quite a mistake; he never gave them any sort of approval; on the contrary, he said that they were worthless for a musician. Herr von Wolzogen is a man of considerable philological attainments, and has worked industriously for the cause of Wagner. I infer from the published correspondence that he once wrote asking Wagner to say something about his books, probably thinking that a line from

[1] I follow the late Sir H. Parry in using the French termination -if for the singular the German -ive for the plural.

him would be useful as an advertisement. Wagner's reply was: "Don't ask me about the impression which your writings make upon me; I am only interested in yourself."[1] In other words: I like *you*, but the less said about your books the better! The term *Leitmotif* is nowhere used by Wagner, and was not invented by him; nor did he invent the method of using musical motives as reminiscences, though he adopted and developed it to an extent unknown before.

. It is not quite easy to explain clearly the right and the wrong use of musical motives in the drama without considering the difficult and contentious question of the relation of music to the language of logic. Strictly a musical phrase can be nothing but itself. It may by a convention be brought into association with something else, so as to suggest it, as in the so-called programme-music of modern composers, but such combinations are artificial, and therefore inartistic. Many things, on the other hand, even of a material nature, have the faculty of affecting our emotions quite apart from their physical aspects in space and time, and this emotional side music can render with a truth, a subtlety, a refinement of gradation quite unknown to the coarser, more material language of words. This is what Beethoven felt when in 1808 he added to the programme of his Pastoral Symphony the words: "Mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei." Who does not recognise in the opening bars a mist lying over the valleys, and a light breath of a spring zephyr gently ruffling its surface? —things purely physical; but it is not the physical, external features of the mist and the breeze; it is the *mood*, or to use the German word the *Stimmung*, which they evoke that the music expresses; a material object as such is not amenable to musical treatment. There is no musical phrase which could express, for example, a ring, or a sword; for these we have names; music is superfluous and becomes a caricature. It

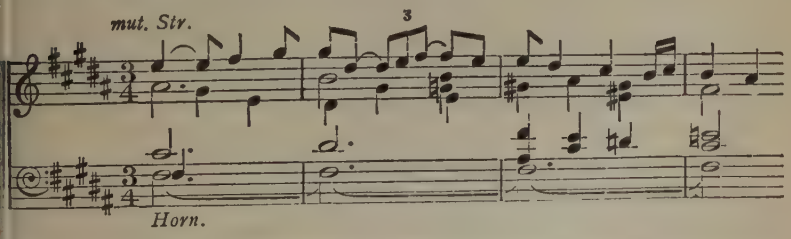
[1] *Briefe an seine Künstler*, p. 376, of November 23rd, 1878. Other passages in this collection point to the same conclusion. Wagner deals with his methods of composing in two essays: *Ueber das Operndichten* and *Ueber die Anwendung der Musik auf das Drama*, both in Vol. x. of his Collected Works.

can, I think, scarcely be denied that Wagner in the earlier portions of the "Ring" used his motives injudiciously. It is not unreasonable to suppose that at first, when feeling his way, he sometimes went astray. An example is the familar "Ring"-motif. The mention of a ring does not affect the feelings in any way. Were it symbolical of eternity possibly some musical expression might be found for it, but it is not so here; it is just a gold ring and nothing more. We do not feel curly, or round, when the word is pronounced, and the phrase on two bassoons progressing in thirds, which recurs like a Norseman's fylgja every time that the ring is mentioned, is dramatically rather irritating than helpful. Similarly with the "Sword"-motif and many others. They are of the "visiting card" character which has been justly ridiculed. Unfortunately most people derive their notions of Wagner's methods from these more obvious examples in *Rheingold*.

But it would be wrong to judge of Wagner's workmanship from his failures. *Rheingold* itself contains many motives which really assist the drama—Loge's chromatic music, for example, or the music of the Rhine-maidens. In the first act of *Die Walküre* the emotional matter is worked up into a climax almost unparalleled. It begins with a phrase generally understood as denoting *pity*. Now pity, as an emotion, is but vaguely expressible in music; there is no marked line of distinction between it and *tenderness;* the phrase might almost mean either, and so in the music the one dissolves imperceptibly into the other, exactly as we find it in nature. Towards the end of the act, where Siegmund mounts the bench, lays his hand upon the sword, his destined heritage, and like a giant exulting tears it from the tree, the action as it were dissolves into music. The pent-up feelings seem to find relief and expression in the long trumpet C *crescendo* piercing the chorus of the full orchestra. In the thrill of that clarion note we feel all the joy, exultation, triumph, victory of the moment, subsiding later at the words "fort in des Lenzes lachendes Haus" into the sweet atmosphere of the spring night. And so indelibly is the association impressed upon the

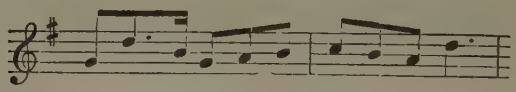
mind of the hearer that if that motif, so environed, recur on a subsequent occasion it will with one magic touch recall the whole scene.

An inanimate object can only affect the soul indirectly, through some association, but a person will do so directly. In the second act of *Die Meistersinger*, where Hans Sachs sings a rollicking song about Eve in Paradise, at the third verse there is interwoven a strain of a strongly contrasted character (Musical Example No. 28), indicating a very different mood of the cobbler poet, more fully brought to light in the following act. It is as if the composer wanted to remind us that we have not yet seen the whole man. How could the harmonious union of these opposing sides of Sachs' character have been so happily expressed in any other way than by the union of the two musical themes? It is just in the union of opposites that music is incomparably more eloquent than logical discourse. No amount of explanatory dialogue could have conveyed what music here conveys with a single touch. In the same work Eva is not a characterless operatic puppet. Her presence calls up something more than her mere bodily features; we may express it with adjectives and abstract nouns, may talk of sweetness and maidenly grace, playful archness, etc., but these clumsy words convey only a shadow of her individuality, and are far from expressing its ineffable charm. Art—poetry or painting—will give something, but only indirectly. Here music will come to our aid, and the delicate phrase in the muted strings:



discloses at once what we are seeking, and later her presence can be indicated by that alone.

The value of music for dramatic expression lies in th first place in its rhythmic lightness and subtlety, enabling i to suggest its object as reminiscence or anticipation, faintl or vividly, as may be required; but still more in its plasti character, in the capacity of a musical phrase for bein moulded into new forms, and thus receiving varied light while still retaining its identity. Such variation is the basi of all the higher instrumental forms, culminating in Beethoven' sonatas and symphonies. Instances in Wagner's works ar countless. The youthful Siegfried has a little simple motiv on the horn:



In *Götterdämmerung* he has grown to be a man; he has slain the dragon and become a hero, and so the little phrase is trans formed accordingly (see Example No. 62). How incomparably more effective dramatically than if something had been inserted in the words to explain that he was now grown up and must no longer be treated as a foolish boy who is afraid of a woman. It is in *Tristan*, and especially in *Parsifal*, that the pregnant use of motives may be most profitably studied. Somewhat similar to the last is the development of the heroic "Parsifal" motif, which during the earlier portion of the play is scarcely heard complete, but always halting or broken. Not until the last scene of all, when temptation is past and victory won, as he advances to end his work, is it heard in its completeness in the rich orchestration appropriate to the action. For the more subtle expression obtained through musical reminiscence I will quote an example from the same work. It is in the third act, after Parsifal's baptism, when he looks round on the blossoming fields and all creation seems to partake in the redemption of that Easter morning, at the words "Ich sah sie welken, die mir lachten" there is just the faintest hint in

he violoncello at the music of the flower-maidens, as if they oo had changed their sad existence. Wagner had a special ondness for his flower-maidens, and I cannot doubt that his eeling is reflected in the passage just quoted. The motive may be used in anticipation, as *presentiment*, before we know ts connection ; so intense is the expressiveness of music that we can sometimes almost feel its meaning before we are told. At the very end of *Die Walküre*, when Wotan after laying the rampart of fire bids those who dread his spear not pass the barrier, a defiant blast from the orchestra leaves no doubt whatever that the fire will be crossed by some fearless hero, long before the phrase is connected with Siegfried.

The employment of music for dramatic ends is, of course, as old as the drama itself. The idea of using longer or short phrases to suggest dramatic situations is obvious, and can be traced back to very early times, at least in the germ. The earliest instance of its methodic use seems to be in the *idée fixe* of Berlioz' *Symphonie fantastique* (1830). Wagner, during the earlier period of his composition, was much impressed with the theories then prevailing regarding the continuity of myths and the interconnection of myths of different peoples with one another. He tried to express this musically by maintaining a thematic connection between his motives, many of which in the "Ring" are variants of each other, without there being any very apparent psychic connection between them. Such overstrained fancies will not be found in his other works.

It has been supposed that because Wagner employs short motives his music is therefore cut up into short, detached phrases. There may be a certain truth in this with regard to some portions of the *Nibelungen*, but those who assert it of his other works can never have looked very closely into the scores. The short motive is only a germ for musical development as it is required by the drama ; where there is fragmentary structure it is because the dramatic situation demands such treatment. In general—notably in *Tristan*—his melody is an endless, unbroken stream ; a whole scene is continuous without even a cadence.

Often the reminiscence is too subtle for analysis—a mere step, or rhythmic or harmonic figure, or peculiar orchestral colouring. Elsa in *Lohengrin* is generally indicated by the wood-wind ensemble; Ortrud and Telramund by the deeper wind or strings, bass-clarinet, English horn, violas and violoncellos. Every work, every scene has its own special character, as with the movements of a symphony. We know that Wagner was often not directly conscious of the technical means which he employed. In a letter to Uhlig (No. 51 of the collection), written some years after the composition of *Lohengrin*, he tells how he *discovered* the "Elsa" clarinet-motive, which he had not been aware of when composing. In his writings he never tires of telling us that he composes without reflection, and forgets all theoretical systems; that his state "resembles that of a somnambulist, unconscious of what he was doing";[1] that his compositions are an enigma to him, and that he might just as easily misunderstand them as anyone else.[2] Elsewhere he says: "Tristan is a marvel to me; I cannot conceive how I ever came to write it."[3] And again: "When I look at my *Nibelungen* or at *Tristan* I seem to awake as from a dream, and ask myself: Where was I?"[4]—and so on repeatedly. The more we study the psychology of the artist the more it comes home to us that the largest and best portion of his creative activity is unconscious. It seems to me a futile question to ask whether an alleged sentiment was *intended* by the poet, if it is there and recognisable. A modern writer has said: "It is peculiar to great talents and geniuses that like somnambulists they find the right way instinctively. It is as though behind their own consciousness the far higher power of truth and nature were creating in their name, caring little whether the fortunate artist wills the right or not."[5] We are reminded of the words of Socrates after he had sought enlightenment from

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, vi. 267.

[2] Letter to Röckel of August 23rd, 1856.

[3] To Mathilde Wesendonk, August, 1860 (p. 242).

[4] *Ib.*, December 23rd, 1860 (p. 262).

[5] H. Schenker *Neue Musikalische Theorien*, p. 77.

the poets regarding the meaning of their own works: "I am almost ashamed to confess the truth, but I must say that there is hardly a person present who would not have talked better about their poetry than they did themselves. Then I knew that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners and soothsayers, who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them."[1]

[1] Apol., 22 B.C. (Jowett's translation).

CHAPTER XII

TANNHÄUSER

WAGNER has in *Tannhäuser* welded together two distinct legends, that of the knight Tannhäuser and that of the Singers' Contest in the Wartburg near Eisenach under the auspices of the Landgraf Hermann of Thuringia. For chronological reasons the historical Tannhäuser cannot have taken part in the Wartburg contest, and scholars have deplored the confusion thus introduced into the legends. The blame, however —if there be any—does not rest with Wagner. Professor Lucas, of Königsberg, had some years before identified Tannhäuser with Heinrich von Ofterdingen, the principal singer at the contest, and it is highly probable that Wagner had heard of his work through Lehrs, whose brother was a Professor at Königsberg University. This, however, concerns us but little ; Wagner always adapted his subject to suit his dramatic treatment.

The *Tannhäuser* legend has itself grown out of the coalescence of several other stories : (1) that of Tannhäuser himself and his supposed sin ; (2) that of the Hörselberg and the Venushöhle ; (3) the legend of the sprouting staff as a symbol of redemption, recurring not unfrequently in the legendary literature of various peoples.[1] In the middle of the thirteenth century there lived a minstrel knight named Tanhûser, of Salzburg, whose date is given approximately by Professor Erich Schmidt as 1205–1270. We know little about his personality ; he spent a wandering existence, visiting the courts of several potentates, and squandering his substance, as he informs us, on women, wine, eating, and bathing twice

[1] As in the Swedish story of Necken, printed in Craigie's *Scandinavian Folklore.*

a week. We possess seventeen of his songs;[1] they are mostly of a fresh and joyous character, about spring and birds and flowers and everything in nature:

> Ich sunge von der heide, von laube unt von dem meien;
> Ich sunge von der sumerzit, von tanze und ouch von reien;
> Ich sunge von dem kalden sne, von regen unt von winde,
> Ich sunge von dem vater unt der muoter, von dem kinde.

often with an erotic tendency, and sometimes stuffed with foreign words. There is, however, one in a different mood, which seems to suggest his having been guilty of some grave sin. After his death his name was remembered, always in connection with his supposed offence; many stories were told about him, which began to take shape in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in a definite *saga*. He is now brought into connection with the Hörselberg, or mountain of Venus, which was definitely located near Eisenach. From that time onwards we have a number of lays, mostly in German, all telling the same story with variants[2]: how he entered the Hörselberg and lived with Venus for a time; how he wearied of her at last and longed for release, and escaped to the outer world; how, failing to obtain absolution, he went on a pilgrimage to Rome, but was rejected by Pope Urban IV., who replied: "Thou shalt no more gain redemption than this staff in my hand shall put forth leaves"; how, finally, he again sought refuge in the Hill of Venus, and before he reached it the staff suddenly broke into leaf, testifying that he was saved, while according to one version at least the Pope was damned for want of Christian charity. The fact that the Pope named, Urban IV. (1261–64), actually was contemporary with the historical Tannhäuser has been held to indicate a possible substratum

[1] They may be read in von der Hagen's *Minnesinger*.

[2] Of the best-known lay there is an excellent English translation in Miss Jessie Weston's *Legends of the Wagner Drama*. Seven are given in the original German in Grässe, *Tannhäuser*. A story closely resembling in many particulars that of Tannhäuser has been traced to an Italian novel by Antoine de la Sale in about the year 1440, of which a full account is given by Gaston Paris in the *Revue de Paris* for 1897 and March, 1898. Whether the saga originated in Germany or in Italy cannot be determined.

of truth in the legend. Venus is here nothing more than the Latin name of the ancient mild and beneficent deity of the Spring, Berchta or Holda,[1] the Germans being in the habit of identifying their own gods with those of Rome, just as the Romans adopted the Greek gods, giving them Latin names. The story went that these discredited heathen gods sought refuge from the persecutions of Christian priests in the depths of the earth, where they live on until the final doom of all things. All the essential features of the *Tannhäuser* story are told in the excellent German of the Brothers Grimm in their *Deutsche Sagen*, and also the legend of the Hörselberg. This work was published in 1816, and Wagner must have been quite familiar with it; he probably also knew the Lay. These were his principal sources; from Ludwig Bechstein he got the idea of Tannhäuser being engaged in the *Sängerkrieg;* from Heine the Venusberg and the pilgrimage; from E. T. A. Hoffmann most of the rest.

The Singers' Contest.—The visitor to the Wartburg will see in the great hall a picture by Moritz von Schwind representing the singing contest which took place in the reign of the Landgraf Hermann in the year 1207. It is the subject of a long poem of the fourteenth century. The minstrel-knights who took part in it are Heinrich von Ofterdingen; Walther von der Vogelweide, the lyric poet and Ghibelline politician; Wolfram von Eschenbach; Klingsohr, a more or less mythical personage; Biterolf, and others. The subject of the contest was the respective merit of different princes, and the knight who was worsted was forthwith led to execution.[2]

Of St. Elisabeth of Hungary, whom Wagner has introduced among his characters, it is hardly necessary to say anything. She is well known from Montalembert's *Memoir*, and to English readers from Kingsley's beautiful poem. She was born in 1207, the year of the contest, in which, of course, she had no part.

At thirty-one Wagner was still young, and *Tannhäuser*,

[1] As was believed at the time. Holda is really a more recent invention.

[2] Those who care to read the intolerably dull lay will find it in an edition pieced together from various MSS. with a German translation by Simrock.

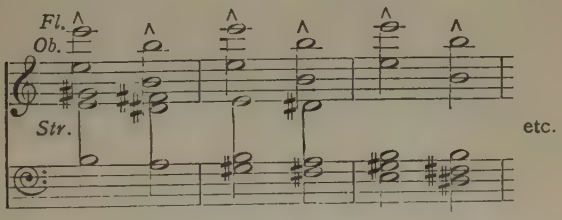
both in its merits and its defects, bears the impress of youth. He has not yet found his feet, but both in design and execution the work shows a great advance towards his realisation of the ideal musical drama. He has for the first time found a subject essentially musical, that is, one in which the action springs inevitably from the emotional impulses of the persons engaged, and which at the same time offers itself for dramatic treatment. The blending of the characters is perfect—the impetuous protagonist, throwing himself with all the vigour of his unstable nature into the impulse of the moment; the saintly Wolfram, effacing himself for the sake of the friend whom he sees preferred before him; the still more saintly Elisabeth, loving with a love as ardent as it is pure; and perhaps excelling all the radiant figure of Venus shining clear and silvery as the Evening Star amid the sordid orgies of her rout—all are drawn with the hand of a master. *Tannhäuser* alone is sufficient to place its author amongst the greatest dramatists of all times. Musically he is now thoroughly master of his craft; the harmonic structure is clear and natural, the orchestration is effective, without exaggeration; even in cases where a powerful effect is sought it is obtained rather by harmonious balance of the instrumental parts than by any specially striking device. As in the transition scene in Act I., where, as the song of the pilgrims dies away in the valley to the gay greeting of the shepherd lad, the sinner's pent-up emotions burst forth in the words: "Allmächt'ger, Dir sei Preis! Gross sind die Wunder Deiner Gnaden!" Musically there is nothing but an ordinary chord of C Minor, yet it would be hard to find anything more overpowering in the works of Wagner or of any other composer. There is a youthful freshness in the general treatment which we miss in the far greater works of his later, more mature life. Such moments as the mingling of the shepherd's song with the chorus of pilgrims in Act I., or as Elisabeth's greeting to the hall in Act II., could not have found a place in the *Ring* or in *Tristan* In the grand chorus of the second act the entry of the single female voice above the mass of men's voices is very "operatic," but the acoustic effect is

so entrancing that we may well forgive its dramatic impropriety.

Again, the poetry, merely as verse, has a freshness, a natural flow and sparkle, quite different from the alliterative verse of the *Ring* or the genial doggerel of *Die Meistersinger*. *Tannhäuser* can be read aloud with pleasure and advantage. Take, for instance, the very touching scene of the meeting between Tannhäuser and Elisabeth, where Wolfram is observing them from the background. Such is the lyric sweetness of the words, with the pathetic "Heinrich! Heinrich! was thatet Ihr mir an?" that the music almost seems superfluous, and indeed the duet which follows is a chilling anticlimax. Here, as often throughout the opera, the diction is on a higher level than the melody. It is just this quality of easy spontaneity that makes *Tannhäuser* such a favourite with the public. Wagner's later works all bear marks of the immense mental labour which has been bestowed upon their composition. They have been built up with forethought and reflection, and demand close study for their comprehension. Not so with *Tannhäuser;* the subject, the conflict between the two ideals of love, is one which at once finds a response in every heart, and the language is that of every-day life, perspicuous and poetical. It calls for little commentary. I shall confine my remarks to a few points which seem to be of interest. For the present we are only concerned with the Dresden version; the alterations made for Paris will be spoken of in their proper place.

The overture is so well known that a detailed examination of it would be superfluous. It is a very effective concert piece, but not to be named beside the great overtures of Mozart and Beethoven. The fundamental note of the opera, the antithesis of saintliness and license, is at once struck in the two subjects, the former being represented by the pilgrims' chant with which it opens. The orgies of the Venusberg touch the limits of what is permissible in musical realism. They group themselves round two figures: a faun, who opens the dance by pirouetting through the scene (Example No. 3), and a

naiad who comes to meet him (Example No. 4). All the motives are very clear; there is a caressing phrase and a giddy dance rendered with extreme realism in the music. Through the infernal revels there suddenly breaks a melody of singular beauty on the A-clarinet. It is the lovely goddess herself, *alma Venus*, serene and mild, shaming the indecent excesses of the crowd around her. The curtain rises disclosing a large cave inside the Hörselberg, with a blue lake amidst a soft, rosy light, with fauns, sirens and naiads, all the conventional paraphernalia of the Court of Love. Tannhäuser is reclining at the feet of Venus, his head resting upon her knee. From a distance is heard the song of sirens, calling the heedless passer-by to enter the mountain and taste of its delights. With Tannhäuser's dreams there mingle faintly the strains of passing pilgrims chanting on their way, and distant sounds of church bells:



On waking he speaks of his weariness: "My dreams were of the cheerful sound of bells, so long unheard; no more I see the sun, no more the friendly stars of heaven, the green blade which brings the summer; no more I hear the nightingale telling of the spring. . . . O Queen! Goddess! let me depart!" She employs every feminine wile to divert his thoughts: she storms, she sulks, she caresses; three times she brings him to his song in her praise, each time pitched a semitone higher, as if with increased tension. She has to give way: "Go then to cold men, from whose dull, timid dream of love we gods have fled deep into the sheltering bosom of earth; there seek salvation, and find it not." "My salvation," he cries, "is in

St. Mary." At the name the scene falls to pieces; Venus and her Court are gone; Tannhäuser finds himself in a green valley beneath the Wartburg. A shepherd-boy is trilling a ditty to "Frau Holda," "for May, sweet May has come!" and the spring is breaking around. A company of pilgrims passes along the valley; Tannhäuser gazes vacantly on the scene, his heart too full to utter a word till he breaks into a fervent cry of rapture and adoration. Bowed to the earth by the overwhelming sense of his sin, he takes up the pilgrims' chant: "Heavily weighs my burden of sin; no rest will I seek. . . ." The idyll is without a parallel in the range of music or poetry.

Soon there is heard the joyous sound of hunting, one C-horn answering two other sets of horns, one in F, the other in E♭. The Landgraf arrives with the knights of his court, but they hesitate on seeing Tannhäuser, for he has left them in anger, and they know not whether he now comes as friend or as foe. It is Wolfram who frankly steps forward to greet him: "Oh, ask him not!" he says. "Is this the mien of pride?" Tannhäuser asks to be reconciled and allowed to depart on his way. "Not so," says Wolfram, "return to Elisabeth." "Elisabeth," he cries. "Oh, might of Heaven! Namest thou that sweet name?" Then Wolfram relates how since his absence she has withdrawn from the Court; the others join, warmly pressing him to return that her presence may once more grace their meetings. In a transport of joy he bursts forth into a flood of poetry which I cannot resist quoting in the original German:

Ha! jetzt erkenne ich sie wieder
Die schöne Welt der ich entrückt!
Der Himmel blickt auf mich hernieder,
Die Fluren prangen reich geschmückt.
Der Lenz mit tausend holden Klängen
Zog jubelnd in die Seele mir;
In süssem ungestümem Drängen
Ruft laut mein Herz: zu ihr, zu ihr!

The scene of the second act is laid in the great hall of the

Wartburg, then the seat of the Landgraves of Thuringia, close to Eisenach, and until the war still in use as an occasional residence of the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar. Joyous passages on the violins introduce the entry of Elisabeth. Those who were present at the first Weimar performance in 1849 narrate that the effect of Elisabeth's greeting to the hall as then sung was such that the curtain had to be lowered until audience and singer had recovered sufficiently for the performance to be continued.[1] Tannhäuser enters, brought in by Wolfram; the scene of their meeting has already been mentioned. After a short interview with her uncle she prepares to receive the guests, who gradually arrive to be present at the forthcoming contest. The minstrel-knights are the last to appear; they are six in number, including Tannhäuser, Wolfram and Walther. The theme is "The Nature of Love." Wolfram sings rapturously of distant contemplation of the beloved object, never defiled by too near approach; he is unmistakably inspired by the presence of Elisabeth. Tannhäuser replies with scorn that he knows no love but with full enjoyment. Elisabeth tries to lead off some formal applause after his song, but meets with no response from the audience.

Here Wagner found himself in a very curious and, for us, very instructive dilemma. Having introduced Walther von der Vogelweide, he had to apportion a part in the contest to him. It would never have done to relegate so famous a poet to a subordinate part like that of Heinrich der Schreiber; and he had to be on the side of respectability, *i.e.* of Wolfram against Tannhäuser. But after Wolfram's rhapsody there was nothing more to be said on that side; he could only repeat platitudes. Wagner could never compose music unless it was forced out of him by dramatic necessity; where there

[1] Frln. Agthe, as she then was, afterwards Rosa von Milde, was living with her husband, Hans Feodor von Milde, in Weimar in the final years of the last century. The two were, among the singers, the mainstay of the Weimar opera under Liszt. She was the first to sing the part of "Elsa" when *Lohengrin* was produced in 1850, her later husband taking "Telramund." Both are now no more. They were the last of the good old school of German singers before the days of corruption. To those who enjoyed the privilege of their friendship their memory is imperishable.

is no such compulsion he can become almost phenomenally dull. Walther's song is among the weakest things that Wagner ever composed; it is, as Bulthaupt remarks, as if he had stagnant water instead of blood in his arteries. We shall see later how when remodelling the work for Paris he tried to rectify his error; but without much success. It shows the danger of introducing historical characters into a legendary work; it has in this instance brought about the emasculation of the whole scene, for the climax fails entirely upon the stage.

Tannhäuser upholds his case with brilliant rhetoric: "Look up to Heaven: behold its stars! Pay *worship* to such marvels, since ye cannot understand them. But that which yields to your touch, which is made of the same stuff as yourselves, whose soft form clings to you—that is for you to *enjoy!*" The company more than disapproves; it is shocked. A grisly old warrior, Biterolf, rises and denounces him; he retorts with fierce irony: "Do *you* talk of love, you grim wolf? Your life has known little of it!" The general resentment increases; swords are being handled. Wolfram rises with one more lofty appeal for temperance and virtue. A flicker from the Venusberg spooks in the orchestra. Tannhäuser, wrought to frenzy, breaks in upon him with his voluptuous dithyramb from the cave: "Miserable beings! you who have never known love—go to the Venusberg!" Thunderstruck, the company breaks up in horror and disorder; the ladies rush from the hall—all except Elisabeth; the men close round the guilty minstrel, about to pierce him with their swords; she throws herself between them; she faces the naked blades. "Back!" she cries. "Back from him! I fear not death. Cast away your wild swords, and hear a maiden speak. Would you rob a sinner of his hope—then say, what hurt has he done to *you?* Look on me; behold the maiden whose blossom with one fell blow he crushed. What is your wound beside the death-stroke which he dealt to me? I loved him; exulting, he pierced my heart. You who are so strong in pure faith, is it thus you mistake the counsel of the Highest? Would you rob the sinner of his hope?

May not he gain pardon by penance and contrition? I pray for him; I pray for his life, that he may repent and know that for him, too, the Redeemer once died." With her words is joined a musical phrase (No. 7) which affords a sublime example of the power of dramatic expression that is possible with the aid of music. Throughout the subsequent part we know that Elisabeth is still praying for him.

She conquers. One by one their swords return to their sheaths, and they bid him seek absolution in Rome. A party of younger pilgrims passes by on their way to the holy city; Tannhäuser rushes off to join them, and the scene closes.

The third act is introduced by an instrumental prelude descriptive of Tannhäuser's pilgrimage to Rome; it tells of thorns and stones on the road. Two principal motives are contrasted.

The visitor to the Royal (Catholic) Church in Dresden on a Sunday morning cannot fail to be struck with the musical passage of rising sixths to which the word "Amen" is sung by the male choir. It has been used by many composers, notably by Mendelssohn in his Reformation Symphony. We have already met with it in *Das Liebesverbot*, and shall find it again in *Parsifal*. It always occurs in some relation to the Catholic Church, and if we wish for a name we may perhaps entitle it "Rome." In the prelude to the third act of *Tannhäuser* it first represents the blasting, implacable, medieval Rome, thundering damnation against the sinner (Example 8A, B). Contrasted with it is the soft phrase No. 7 on hautboys and clarinets telling us that through the bitterness of his penance her prayer will prevail against the papal anathema.

In the scenes which follow to the end of the work the drama with music has attained almost perfect form. From the beginning to the end the action is coherent and continuous, the employment of musical motives as reminiscences is always telling, and often deeply poetical. *Arias* there are; so there are in *Die Meistersinger*, formally his most perfect work; but as in *Die Meistersinger* they spring naturally out of the dramatic

situation, and heighten instead of impeding its effect. The whole act is worthy of close study, for the sake of the way in which the motives are employed, but it should not be touched by the rude hand of the critic.

On the curtain rising Elisabeth is seen praying beneath an image of the Virgin, beside a path leading up to the Wartburg. It is autumn and the time has come for the pilgrims to return. Will *he* return absolved? A short distance away, unseen by her, stands Wolfram. He, too, loves Elisabeth, with a silent love, far purer than that of Tannhäuser, and he knows that it is not returned. Through his mind pass the strains of his song at the contest, of his deep, self-immolating love. The pilgrims approach rejoicing in the grace and pardon of which they have partaken. Elisabeth watches them intently as they pass; the last one disappears up the valley; he is not among them. Broken strains of melody, visions of her former happiness float through her brain; she utters one fervent prayer of humble resignation to the Virgin, the tone of the bass-clarinet lending an atmosphere of unutterable tenderness to the scene, and departs homewards up the pathway to die. The night is falling; the Evening Star shines forth, and through it Wolfram sends a last greeting "from the heart which never betrayed her" to the soul that is now passing. Scarcely is his elegy finished when there appears a worn and haggard figure whom he recognises as Tannhäuser; his penitence has been rejected, and he is now seeking his way back to the Venusberg. On hearing that Wolfram is not his enemy he tells his story of the self-inflicted penance which he has endured on his way to Rome:

> When others trod the soft green sward, my naked feet stepped on thorns and stones. When they sought refreshment at the fountain, I bared my head to the burning rays of the sun. While they murmured prayers to Heaven, my blood flowed in praise of the Highest. When they found sweet repose in the monastery, my bed was laid in snow and ice. With closed eyes I passed the lovely plains of Italy, and saw not their wonders. I did it, for in contrition I would repent *that I might soothe the tear of my angel.*

Observe, his impelling motive is not the sense of sin and the hope of forgiveness, but his love for Elisabeth; he wishes for no redemption but through her.[1] He relates how he came before the Holy Father, how others received absolution and departed rejoicing—here the "Rome" motif assumes an entirely different character played by three flutes and a hautboy; it is now mild and joyful. When his turn came the reply was: "Hast thou shared the joys of Hell? Hast thou been in the Venusberg? Then for ever be thou damned. As this staff in my hand shall never again put forth green leaves, so shalt thou never be redeemed from Hell-fire." "And now," Tannhäuser continues, "to thee, O Venus, I return; for ever shalt thou smile on me." Flashes of music from the first Venus scene dart through the orchestra, and the goddess herself appears with all her court before his eyes. Wolfram conjures him to keep back from the Hell which is closing around them. They wrestle together: "An angel prayed for thee on earth," he cries; "Elisabeth." Tannhäuser repeats: "Elisabeth! holy one, pray for me!" The apparition instantly vanishes. Distant sounds of chanting priests are heard; it is a funeral procession carrying the body of Elisabeth to its last resting-place, followed by the Landgraf and all the Court. Wolfram signs to them to place the open coffin on the ground and leads Tannhäuser to its side. The younger band of pilgrims come hurrying in proclaiming a miracle; the dry staff in the priest's hand has suddenly burst into green. The "Rome" motif is heard in its milder, pardoning form. Tannhäuser is released from the curse and expires by the side of Elisabeth's coffin.

Such is the version of the closing scene usually adopted for performance. In the original production in 1845 neither Venus nor the body of Elisabeth nor the younger pilgrims announcing the miracle appeared upon the scene. Two other versions were made in successive years, the text being suitably altered, and it would seem a special ending was composed for Paris in 1861.

[1] Many luminous remarks on the psychology of Tannhäuser will be found in Wagner's essay in *Ges. Schr.*, v. 123.

They are all described by Wilhelm Tappert in an article in *die Musik*, i. 4 (1902), p. 1,844.

The fate of an artist is sometimes inscrutable. To us it seems very strange that a subject so emotional as Tannhäuser should have been condemned by the critics of the time as "political." It was supposed to inculcate anti-Catholic and, consequently, anti-royalist principles.[1] Wagner's attitude towards Christianity and the Christian Church at this time is remarkable. We know that Wolfram, the typical Christian knight, was distasteful to him, yet with what wonderful sympathy has he drawn Wolfram! His dictum, "I require nothing more from my hearers than a warm heart and open senses," is true of all his works, but pre-eminently true of *Tannhäuser*.

At a later time, when his mind was occupied with Schopenhauer, Wagner describes *Der Holländer*, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* as expressing "the high tragic of resignation . . . the one redeeming power, the negation of will." With all respect for his utterances I cannot but think that he was under a misapprehension—unless we are to admit that every tragedy expresses a pessimist philosophy. The mere fact of a hero perishing in the struggle with his environment does not constitute pessimism. Wagner before everything else was a poet; he represented human life as he saw it, not through the spectacles of any philosophical doctrine. It is the assertion, not the negation of will that leads Tannhäuser to destruction. I should be inclined to doubt whether Wagner when he wrote this had fully understood Schopenhauer's metaphysical creed. Although he reflected a great deal, and often very deeply, he was not in the strict sense a philosopher. He saw and judged everything with reference to himself and his own creative activity—a habit of mind which is the very opposite to that of the philosopher.

I need only refer very briefly to a question which caused a good deal of heart-burning at the time. In the *adagio* of the

[1] The reader will remember that the royal family of Saxony was Catholic.

great finale of the second act, at the words "zum Heil den Sündigen zu führen" the first singer, Tichatschek, was in Wagner's opinion unequal to his part. In these words Tannhäuser signifies his consciousness of his sin, his repentance, and his hope of salvation through Elisabeth, "Heaven's mediator." Rather than that the passage should be misrepresented by an inadequate singer Wagner cut it out in the Dresden performance. This sacrifice he had to make, but it was a measure of despair for that occasion only. By the omission, he says, Tannhäuser's character is rendered unintelligible; the words in question are the centre of the whole drama. The theatres, however, always ready to make cuts for the sake of their singers, assumed that he had given a general sanction to it; even Liszt seems to have fallen into this error.[1] Wagner insists in the strongest manner upon the omitted passage being restored, and it was upon this more than anything else that his persistent refusal to sanction representations not controlled by him was based. Wagner's theories sometimes outstrip his practice; is he not here under an illusion regarding the effect of the passage in the actual performance? Granting that Tannhäuser's awakening to the consciousness of his sin is a vital motive, is it one which is so decisively conveyed just here that it will not be realised if the passage is omitted? In the Dresden version, with which we are here concerned, it forms one voice in a twelve-part ensemble, and the words would certainly not be distinguishable. In the later Paris version he assigned them to a solo. What they relate seems perfectly clear from the dramatic situation, from all that goes before and all that follows after. Wagner's passion for clearness is wholly admirable, but here he seems to be chasing a phantom.

[1] See his letter December 27th, 1852.

CHAPTER XIII

LOHENGRIN

WHEN speaking of primitive legends we must distinguish between myth and story-telling. The myth, the original germ, is very simple ; it is merely a poetical way of describing some familiar phenomenon by a people whose natural language was poetry, to whom all things were living, and to whom the distinction between the *Ego* and its environment was less apparent than it is to us. When the primitive man wishes to tell how vegetation retires into the earth in the winter and comes forth with renewed life in the summer he says that Persephone spends half the year in Hades and returns to the upper world for the other half, and this is probably all that there was in the original myth. Then he, or another, goes on to weave a story around it ; he tells how Mother-Earth went to seek her daughter, how she wept for her and so on.

There is, however, another aspect of the myth to be considered. An English statesman recently remarked that "history is a jumble of untruths ; only the great myths are supremely and eternally true." How is this to be understood ? Myths express the great root-principles of human life, the *Universals* or *Ideas* which Plato sought vainly to put into logical form. Every god, whether heathen or Christian, is an idea, expressible, not by logic, but in art, the natural language of primitive peoples. To those who believe that truth is only to be found in the eternal ideas the saying which I have quoted will therefore need no further elucidation.

We gain a glimpse of the mythical germ of the swan-knight story in the legend of Skjöld or Scyld, the fabulous first King of the English in Denmark, in Æthelweard (d. 998) and in

William of Malmesbury (d. 1143).[1] The story is almost the same in both; it is of a hero called Sceaf (*i.e.* "sheaf"), who comes in a boat to Denmark (old Anglia) and is made king. This same hero figures in our far-earlier English poem, *Beowulf*, where he is called Scyld of the Sheaf, and where a full account is given of his being sent back after his death over the waters whence he came. It is simply a story of the mysterious coming and going of the corn-crops; that is, it was so at first, until the poets and story-tellers came and added details of their own invention, how he was born in Noah's Ark, how they laid rich treasure in his boat, etc. It coalesced with other myths, and later they adorned it still further; they told of a swan, the wondrous bird of the north, who drew the boat, and Sceaf became a knight sleeping beside a sheaf of corn.

The swan had a different origin. It was a sun-myth, and came from Friesland. It was no knight that the swan drew, but a god, the lord of the swans, who are the clouds. The sun, "at once the highest good and deepest riddle," is seen ushered by the clouds in the morning; he reigns o'er the world, bestowing blessings and happiness on men during the day, and retires behind clouds in the evening, but we must not ask whence he came nor whither he goes.[2]

The story established itself in Lower Lorraine. It is especially connected with the families of Brabant, of Bouillon and of Clèves. In its most general outlines it is everywhere the same; it tells of a lady in distress helped by a knight coming in a boat drawn by a swan. He forbids any question as to his origin or parentage. After delivering her from her trouble he marries her and rules her country with justice and

[1] A full account of the fable will be found in Chadwick's *Origin of the English Nation*, pp. 274 *sqq*.

[2] Those who are sufficiently interested may read the articles by Hoffory in *Gött. Gelehrte Anz.* (N), 1888, pp. 163 and 428 *sqq.*; one by Golther in *Roman. Forsch.*, 1889–90; his festival speech on *Die Gralssage bei Wolfram* (Rostock, 1910). Messrs. Vigfusson and York Powell have made out the equation: Hoenir (the "lord of the swans") = κύκνος (*Corp. Poet. Bor*, Intr., p. cii.). The antiquity of the story is proved by an inscription discovered in Housestead in Northumberland, which shows it to have been current in Friesland early in the third century A.D.

wisdom, until at last she puts the fatal question and he departs from her, the swan returning to take him away.

It was only natural that in about the twelfth century this legend should have become connected with another of an entirely different origin, that of the Holy Grail. This itself grew out of the coalescence of two distinct legends: (*a*) that of the Grail proper, the wondrous jewel, or the dish or cup out of which our Lord partook of the Last Supper, and which, after his Crucifixion, received his blood. It was brought by Joseph of Arimathea to Avalon (Glastonbury), "the holyest erth of england," or by another version it was brought by a host of angels down from Heaven and deposited with knights worthy of such honour, to become a source of grace and good-will to mankind. This united with (*b*) the story of King Arthur and his knights; naturally, the swan-knight was sent by the Grail. The story became famous and spread all over Europe. By the trouvères of southern France the Temple of the Grail was located in Montsalvat (the Mountain of Salvation; or perhaps Mont-saulvage, the Wild Mountain), near Roncesvalles in the Pyrenees. The name of the swan-knight is variously Elias (the Biblical name) or Lohengrin (from Garins li Loherain, Garin of Lorraine, a name that occurs in an old poem). The mission of the Grail was to send forth its knights on errands of mercy, and especially to aid distressed persons, but they were forbidden to say whence they came.

The story thus compounded was told in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by both French and German poets whose works have come down to us. The Clèves version is said to be narrated in a work of Helinandus, a monk of Friedmont, who died in 1227. It is not in the published portion of his history, but in a fifteenth-century chronicle we read: "The first Count of Clèves was named Elias, who came from the Earthly Paradise in a ship through the waters of the Rhine, drawn by a swan *with a golden chain round its neck*[1] up to the

[1] Traits which have been retained by Wagner are distinguished by italics.

astle at Nymegen, which then belonged to the territories of lèves. There lived in the castle a noble maiden . . . etc." he story went on to tell how he married her and forbade er to ask of his name or origin. After some years had passed he asked him for the sake of their children to tell whence he ame. He at once departed, *leaving behind a sword, a horn nd a ring.*[1] The Counts of Clèves, his descendants, lived in castle which still bears the name of Schwanenburg. With Anne of Clèves in 1540 the swan came to England, passing ventually to the signboards of taverns.

Another account is given in a French poem entitled *Le Chevalier au Cygne.*[2] Here again the knight is named Helias; his home is in Lillefort in Flanders. The swan is his brother, nd has been bewitched by a wicked grandmother. The maid whom he delivers is Clarissa Duchess of Buillon, who lives at Nimaie (Nimeguen), and whose lands are threatened by the Comte de Blancquebourg. Helias is brought in a boat by his wan-brother, fights with the usurper and marries Clarissa. He forbids her to ask about his origin; after they have lived ome time together she breaks his command and he departs. There is no direct connection with the Grail; the motives are purely political.

Wolfram von Eschenbach composed his great epic *Parzivâl* between 1204 and 1210.[3] He gives the story very sketchily, but the main features are the same, except that the maiden was persecuted by no one more formidable than her numerous overs, and there was no fight. Loherangrîn is one of the *Templeisen*, or knights of the Grail at Munsalvaesche. He is sent in a boat drawn by a swan to Antwerp to be the husband of the Duchess of Brabant, a maiden who has many lovers, but scorns them all. Loherangrîn tells her that *he has renounced*

[1] Grimm, *Deutsche Sagen*, No. 525; Görres, *Lohengrin*, Intr., pp. lxxi. *sqq.*

[2] The French text has been published by Baron Reiffenberg in the first volume of his work *Le Chevalier au Cygne* (Bruxelles, 1848).

[3] The best edition is that of Ernst Martin, with a full Commentary (2 vols., Halle, 1900). There are several German translations, and an excellent English one by Miss Jessie Weston with Excursuses and Notes (D. Nutt, 1894). The story of the Swan-knight will be found at the end of the last book.

a realm elsewhere on her account, and that if he is to rule over her land as Duke of Brabant she must never ask whence he came. They marry and have several children, but at last, on her asking the forbidden question, he departs again to the Grail, his friend the swan coming to fetch him away. *He leaves behind a sword, a ring and a horn.* The Minnesinger Wolfram von Eschenbach could neither read nor write; he professes to have drawn his material from a Provençal named Kiot, perhaps Guyot of Provins near Paris, but perhaps fictitious.[1] Kiot, he says, had it from a heathen astrologer named Flagetanis, who read it in the stars, together with the name Grail.

Wolfram was a Bavarian, and some time after his death there sprang up among his fellow-countrymen a school of imitators, whose purpose it was to expand subjects which he had already treated, and whose works for some time actually passed for those of Wolfram. Albrecht von Scharfenberg, towards the middle of the thirteenth century, composed a *Titurel* of about 40,000 lines especially notable for its dulness, but which was probably known to Wagner.[2] It is known as *Der jüngere Titurel.* Here the story is different. The knight Lohengrin comes to Lyzabori ("afterwards called Lothringen") and marries Belaye. She loves him tenderly, but is tormented with jealousy, and is told to eat a bit of his flesh. One night her relations *attack her husband in his bedroom.* Many of them are slain, but he receives a wound and dies. Belaye dies of grief and they are both buried together.

A similar poem, entitled *Lohengrîn,* is by an anonymous Bavarian,[3] and was composed between 1283 and 1290. It is narrated as an episode of the *Wartburgkrieg* mentioned in the last chapter. It is on a higher level than the last, and is especially noteworthy because it has been followed more closely by Wagner than any other. The dying Duke of Brabant

[1] The most recent scholars seem to hold that he was a real person.

[2] The bare text was published by K. A. Hahn in 1842. The legend is contained in strophes 5918 to 5962.

[3] Edited by Görres, and by H. Rückert (Quedlinburg and Leipzig, 1858).

has entrusted his realm to Friedrich von Telramunt, whom he wishes to marry his daughter Elsa or Elsam or Elsâny. She, however, refuses to marry him, and in her distress appeals to King Henry the Fowler (919–936), who orders her to find a champion to fight for her cause. She sounds a golden bell, which is heard like thunder, far in the Pyrenees at Muntsalvaetsch, by Artûs (King Arthur). He despatches one of his knights, Lohengrin, the son of Parzivâl. As he is about to mount his horse a swan comes "gevlozzen" bringing a ship. Lohengrin enters the ship and is taken by the swan to Prâbant, the swan singing like an angel all the way. Five days they sailed without food; then the swan caught a fish from the sea and divided it with the knight. At Brabant he overcame Telramunt, married Elsa and had children by her. A large section of the lay is taken up with his wars in the service of the Emperor. On his return he overcomes the Duke of Clèves in a tourney. The Duchess, his wife, remarks in scorn that no one knows whence the victor came. Elsa took this to heart and spoke of it to her husband; at last she conjured him to tell her whence he came for the sake of their children. Lohengrin then went before the Emperor at Antwerp, and publicly declared his name and his parentage. Thereupon the swan returned and took him back to his home.

One more Bavarian remains to be mentioned, Konrad von Würzburg, whose *Schwanritter*[1] was composed towards the end of the thirteenth century. Here it is the Duke of Saxony who persecutes the Duchess of Brabant, and the Emperor who comes to judge her cause is "Karl" (Charlemagne). A knight comes up drawn by a swan, *to whom he bids farewell.* The events are much the same as in the other versions; the Duchess in despair falls on her knees *and prays to God to send her a champion.* The knight volunteers to fight for her and is victorious, marries her daughter, and departs when, for the sake of their children, she asks the fatal question. The children become ancestors of the illustrious race of Gelderland and of Clèves.

[1] Edited by Müllenhof in *Altdeutsche Sprachproben* (Berlin, 1871).

I have indicated by italics incidents which, trivial in themselves, seem to have been noted by Wagner and adopted in his own version, in order to show how he will select any feature, however minute, which he can employ effectively for his dramatic plan. These are some of the forms which the story has assumed; many more are summarised in Reiffenberg's edition of the Chevalier. With the French poets the narrative is more racy and more full of incident; with the Germans more internal and human. Its psychic essence is the eternal conflict between the divine and the human; the inability of a mortal to receive a divine message or to contemplate divinity in its naked purity. It is the story of Zeus and Semele, told in the language of western Europe. The whole drama is laid, as Wagner has himself told us, in the heart of Elsa, in its transition under exceptional influences from unconditional, unquestioning faith, to hesitation, doubt, and at last to renunciation of her faith. She is too human to love where she does not fully understand. I cannot do better than quote Wagner's own words:

> Lohengrin sought a woman who believed in him, who did not ask who he was or whence he came, but loved him as he was, and because he was just as he seemed to her to be, a woman to whom he did not need to explain or justify himself, but who loved him unconditionally. He had to conceal his higher nature because in no other way could he escape becoming a mere object of wonder and blind amazement, or of humble adoration. He wanted not worship but love, which alone could relieve his solitude and satisfy his longing. Nevertheless there hovers around him the halo of the Saint; he cannot help being wonderful. The gaping of vulgarity, the venom of envy, cast their shadow over the heart of his beloved; doubt and jealousy show that he is not understood but adored, and he is compelled to disclose the divinity of his nature. Crushed, he returns to his solitude.[1]

In *Tannhäuser* we saw how the words and the dramatic action overshadowed the music; here the reverse is the case. The germ of *Lohengrin* is musical; it is permeated by the

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iv. 295.

fragrance of the Grail. Far less care has been bestowed upon the diction than upon the music. The story is of the simplest kind, and lends itself easily to unity of action, but the unity is disturbed by superfluous incidents, such as the bedroom attack by Telramund and his four knights. The whole part of Telramund after his overthrow is superfluous. These, of course, are trifles, but they tend to show that the composer, rapt in his music, was careless of the construction of the drama. We shall meet with the same phenomenon in *Tristan*, where the words are frequently so obscure as to be barely intelligible.

In what is called musical declamation, *i.e.* the articulate coherence between the music and the words, *Lohengrin* shows a marked advance upon all its predecessors. In a letter to Liszt of September 8th, 1850, Wagner dwells upon the subject very emphatically, and his words are worth quoting. After describing how German singers from continual singing of foreign operas in bad translations had fallen into the evil habit of ignoring the bond between word and tone, and taking the *tempo* too loosely, he continues:

> Nowhere in *Lohengrin* have I written the word *recitative* over a vocal passage. The singers are not to know that there are any recitatives in it. On the contrary, I have been at pains to determine and indicate the spoken accent of the words with such sharpness and certainty that the singer has only to sing in the *tempo* prescribed, giving to each note its proper value, to have the speaking expression completely in his control.

We shall return to this presently. We must not take his words too literally; there are very distinct recitatives in *Lohengrin*; only he wishes to impress upon singers the necessity of singing them in strict *tempo*.

Another advance, already foreshadowed in *Tannhäuser*, definitely adopted in *Lohengrin*, is in the constitution of the wind. Each instrumental colour is represented by at least three instead of two instruments; thus there are three flutes, two hautboys and an English horn, two clarinets and a bass

clarinet.[1] By this means he was able to get complete chords, pure in any colour that was wanted. Similar in principle is his practice of dividing up the strings. The gain in purity of tone by means of this simple device is considerable. At the same time he imparted solidity and sonority by adding a strong foundation in the bass-tuba.[2]

The prelude to *Lohengrin* is, to my thinking, the finest of all Wagner's instrumental compositions. It is also one of the most realistic ; it scarcely needed him to tell us that it depicts the descent of the Grail conveyed by a glorious host of angels, to be entrusted to the keeping of the purest and noblest of men living in a world of hatred and strife, the *Templeisen* of Montsalvat. It moves in a long-sustained climax, the instruments entering gradually in groups until the culmination is reached at bar 50. It opens with a soft dove-like motive associated with the Grail itself. The instrumentation of the opening chords is worth study ; here at once we note the purity of colour. The musical example No. 9 is arranged so as to make clear the rather intricate disposition of the instruments. There are three groups : (1) the main body of the violins divided into four equal parts ; (2) two flutes accompanied by two hautboys ; (3) four soli violins, all sounding harmonics. Each group plays the full chord in its own position. The subject is continued in the violins alone until the 20th bar, where the wood-wind enters, carrying it on in harmony, while the violins play independent voices. At bar 36 the theme is taken up by all the lower strings, with one of the horns, the other three supplying harmony. At the 45th bar trombones

[1] It has been stated that Wagner was anticipated by Purcell. All I can find is that in a duet Purcell added a bass trumpet to the two ordinarily employed. Dr. Naylor points out that Bach often has three trumpets and three hautboys *plus* a tenor hautboy and bassoon.

[2] On the bass-tuba Dr. Naylor writes : "It was never, in my opinion, fitted to be the bass to three trombones. Its proper place is *là bas*, and this Wagner saw well in the Ring. In *Lohengrin* a good example of the right way is where the six nobles step out the ground for the duel. A case of the *wrong* use is in the middle of the Prelude, the portion in D-major (*sehr gehalten*), where the tuba sounds vile. It is very horrid sometimes in *Tannhäuser ;* a nasty, bumpy noise, spoiling the trombone clearness, and often much better an octave lower."

and bass-tuba begin to be heard *piano*, joined a few bars later by trumpets and drums, swelling powerfully until the *fortissimo* is reached in bars 54 to 56, with two clashes of the cymbals as the Grail shines forth and all the earth seems filled with its radiance. Gently as it began the music dies away, the violins descending through a scale of two-and-a-half octaves, accompanied by an ascending scale in the bass. The angels depart leaving the holy vessel behind. The Grail motive is never absent for a moment; the modulations are not extensive, the composition depending more on skilful interweaving of voices and contrasts of colour for its effect.[1]

The scene of the action is laid in Antwerp, on the bank of the Scheldt, whither the German King, Henry the Fowler, has come with his following of Saxons to administer justice in ancient fashion beneath an oak, and to levy troops for his wars against the Hungarians. The Duke of Brabant has recently died; his heir, the youthful Duke Godfrey, has disappeared, and his sister Elsa is accused of having murdered him to gain the rule for herself and a lover with whom she is alleged to hold secret communication. The charge is brought by Friedrich von Telramund, the leader of the Brabançons, who states that he intended to marry Elsa, but on learning her guilt has renounced her, and has married instead Ortrud, daughter of the Frisian prince, Radbod, whom he now presents to the King. Elsa is summoned; she enters as if in a trance. When called upon to answer the charge she replies incoherently, telling of a dream, in which a knight appeared to her. Her words are accompanied by the wood-wind orchestra with a *tremolando* on the strings, to which is added later a harp, interspersed with trumpet notes when the knight is mentioned. Lohengrin is still more directly indicated by anticipation in a new motive (No. 11). The rather free modulations follow the situation closely. Elsa's mind, staggered by the infamous

[1] Wagner's explanatory programme is contained in Vol. V. of his works. It is written in a rhapsodical style well suited to the subject. The glorious descent of the Grail is described in Malory, Book xiii., chap. 7.

accusation against her, is unable to collect itself; she is barely able to speak.

Judgment is to be made by ordeal of single combat. The lists are prepared and the heralds, directing their trumpets toward the four quarters of the earth, call for a champion to appear on behalf of the accused Elsa of Brabant. There is no answer. The call is repeated, and again answered by silence. In the agony of her despair Elsa falls on her knees and offers up a fervant prayer to God: "Thou didst bring my cry to him; he came to me at Thy command. O Lord, now tell my knight that he help me in my need!" Her words are answered by the Lohengrin motive in the trumpets. There is a movement among the crowd of Brabantines on the shore of the river. At first a few voices are heard here and there: "See! See! A swan! He draws a boat! By a golden chain! A knight in it! A miracle!" It is impossible to give a description of this wonderful chorus for men's voices. It is in two divisions, the first consisting of those near the river who see the swan approaching, the other of those farther away, who ask what is the matter, and crowd up to see for themselves, all uniting in a mighty climax as the boat comes to the shore, and Lohengrin, clad in a silver armour, steps from it, his motive sounding *ff* from the entire orchestra. After a touching farewell, introduced by the harmonies of the Grail (the "swan," No. 10B), he dismisses the swan and announces himself as prepared to fight in the cause of Elsa of Brabant. In a tone of authority he turns to Elsa herself, and asks whether in the event of his being victorious she is willing to accept him as her husband, if so, there is one condition: she must never ask his name or his race (No. 12). She replies, faltering, still dazed by all that is happening. He calls in upon her words: "Elsa! hast thou understood?" and repeats his condition a semitone higher, as if with greater emphasis. She accepts his command absolutely.

Preparations are now forthwith begun for the fight. The king's prayer before the battle has been described as a marvel of melody and harmony. After another chorus of more musical

than dramatic interest they fight and Telramund is vanquished. Another massive chorus brings the act to an end. Elsa's entry on the high note G, with an abrupt harmonic transition of unusual boldness, is very striking. The chord is the dominant of D, of which the G is the 7th, but quite suddenly the key changes to B♭, the G remaining as the major 9th of the dominant. It expresses the sudden and violent reaction of joy and triumph after the fearful strain which she has undergone, and so may be justified.

The scene of the second act is laid in front of the ducal castle in the following night. Telramund, vanquished and driven from the Court, is sitting on the steps of the minster with his wife, Ortrud. A long, brooding introduction on the 'cello is interrupted by a reminiscence of the prohibition, while sounds of revelry issue from the palace. Ortrud stares fixedly at the windows; she feels only rage and longing for vengeance, while the weak Telramund in his despair would slay her if he had but a weapon. For it was by her advice, by her spells and falsehoods that he was misled; it is she who has bewitched the Prince Gottfried; she has transformed him into a swan, the very swan that brought Lohengrin hither, and the golden chain which formed the bridle is the talisman which holds him in her power. Telramund is only her tool. With scathing irony she taunts him with cowardice, and urges him to strike a blow for vengeance. The stranger knight, she says, is strong through magic; inflict the smallest wound on him, if but the loss of a finger, and his might will vanish. Or force him to disclose his name and race, and he is lost; this Elsa alone can do; leave her to me. While they are speaking Elsa enters on the balcony above, refreshing herself in the cool air of the night. There now appears for the first time on the clarinet the short strain mentioned at the end of Chapter XI. as connected with Elsa. Telramund withdraws. Ortrud calls to Elsa; with cunning pretence of humility she poses as an injured person, and reproaches Elsa for having brought her to ruin. Elsa, touched by her condition, descends, Ortrud taking advantage of her momentary absence to invoke her

heathen gods Wotan and Freia. Having gained Elsa's entire confidence, she gently assumes the rôle of a friendly monitor; she warns her not to trust too blindly to her present happiness; what if her mysterious knight should leave her, and her happiness should end, as it began, by magic? Elsa, in her maidenly innocence, smiles at her doubts, but the poison has entered. She takes Ortrud under her protection, that she may appear fitly arrayed at the wedding.

The day has begun to dawn. The people begin to collect in front of the minster. A herald announces that the new knight will after his marriage undertake the rule of the country and will lead them against the enemy. The crowd acclaim his words, but four knights are heard speaking together: Who is this, they ask, that is going to take us out of the country? To them suddenly steps Telramund, who has been hiding behind a column. He speaks darkly of his intention to unmask the new-comer.

Their talk is interrupted by the pages clearing the way for the bride and bridegroom. A procession of ladies gorgeously apparelled accompanies Elsa, whose motive (No. 13) is now taken up by the violins in the brighter key of E♯. The voices of the double chorus join in hailing her as she passes. The passage where the key reverts to E♭[1] at the words "Sie naht, die engelgleiche . . . " is most remarkable in the effect obtained by a large body of violins *pp* supported by the whole orchestra, minus the trumpets and hautboys, in sustained chords, as Elsa reaches a point where she rests in full view of the spectators, holding her arms aloft as if in prayer, her face turned upwards and beaming with rapture. As she is about to ascend the steps of the minster Ortrud steps from the procession and forbids her to advance. She has thrown off the

[1] On this sudden change of key Dr. Naylor remarks: "It is a startler, and certainly shows Elsa up, as formerly at the beginning of Scene 2, where the F♯ minor of Frederic and Ortrud turns into B♭ major as Elsa appears." To my own feeling there is no real change of key; the whole section from the beginning of the scene is in E♭, only for the fifteen bars of the soft chorus the pitch is, as it were, screwed up a semitone higher, with very beautiful effect of momentary exaltation.

mask of humility, and insolently demands her place before the bride of a nameless adventurer. An altercation follows between the two ladies: Ortrud again hints that the knight is protected by magic arts: Elsa replies, but cannot refute her. Ortrud is forced to retire by the entry of the king and Lohengrin, supported by all the nobles of the court. The procession advances, and just as they are about to enter the minster Telramund appears upon the steps, and addressing the king so that all may hear openly accuses the knight of using magic arts, and calls upon him to disclose his name and origin. The crowd is perplexed, but favours Lohengrin, who replies calmly that he may not disclose his name, even if the king himself should ask him; the question may only be put by Elsa. Ortrud has been silently watching the scene; she knows that doubt has already entered Elsa's heart in spite of her resolute bearing. After another chorus Friedrich approaches Elsa and promises to help her if she will trust him, but he is driven away by Lohengrin. Another chorus follows; the trumpets sound and are answered by chords on the organ within the minster; the "prohibition" in the brass just as the curtain falls indicates what is working in Elsa's mind. Again she catches the eye of Ortrud, and the scene ends as they enter the minster.

The third act opens with joyous and festive music. The curtain rises on the bridal chamber, to which Lohengrin and Elsa are being conducted by the knights and ladies of the court singing a hymeneal. The culmination of the whole work is in the scene where for the first time the two are left alone. Of the lyric beauty of the earlier part it is better to say nothing. Elsa, filled with love and gratitude towards her deliverer, is racked with doubt. Every shade of her emotion is followed minutely in the music, as she works herself into an agony of uncertainty and distraction. Lohengrin, with chivalrous tenderness, tries to restrain her and to divert her mind. It is not curiosity that impels her, but the fear that he may some day leave her. Gently, but with severity, he reminds her of her promise; she owes him trust, as he trusted

her, and he hints that it was from no obscure and humble state, but from glory and high fortune that he came for her deliverance. This only enhances her fears; then surely he will tire of her and want to return to his own country, leaving her in sorrow. Softly in the wood-wind are whispered the harmonies of the Grail. A sound is heard at the door; before her fevered fancy rises the vision of the swan, as if coming to fetch him away. "Elsa!" he cries, "What wilt thou do?" She can endure no longer; she *must* know whence he came; delirious with agitation she demands to know his name and his race. At that moment Telramund and his four knights break in upon them. Elsa hurriedly hands his sword to the husband whom the moment before she was defying, and with it he slays Telramund. She throws herself into the arms of her husband, but it is now too late. He orders the body of the slain man to be brought before the king for judgment, where he will himself appear to declare publicly his name and condition.

The last scene is under the oak, as in the first act, where the king is about to assemble the people for his campaign against the Hungarians. With much pomp and ceremony the nobles arrive with their followers. The king opens the meeting with a speech. The body of Telramund is brought in, Elsa too arrives, and lastly Lohengrin. He tells how he slew the knight who treacherously attacked him, and goes on to declare how Elsa has broken the promise which they all heard. He must answer her, and they shall know that his condition is as illustrious as that of the best amongst them. The music is now that of the prelude with divided violins and the whole of the following speech is accompanied by the Grail. He tells them of Montsalvat, of the temple there standing, and of the wonderful vessel called the Grail, whose virtue is maintained by a dove sent yearly from Heaven. When the Grail sends out its knights in defence of virtue and innocence they must remain unknown; once his name is divulged the knight must return to the Grail. He will now answer the question which Elsa has put him. His father, Parzival, is King of the Grail-land, and

ne, his knight, is named Lohengrin. He cannot go forth with heir armies ; he must now leave them. They all pray him to relent, to stay and lead them, but he may not listen to them ; he Grail is calling him. Once more its harmonies are heard ; once more the swan is seen approaching with the boat. He turns to Elsa to bid her a last farewell ; had she been steadfast for one year her brother whom she thought dead would have returned. He leaves with her to be given to him when he comes a sword, a horn and a ring. Ortrud, who has recognised he swan, turns to Elsa and mockingly thanks her for having rid them of the stranger. A dove is seen hovering over the boat. Lohengrin then releases the chain from the neck of the swan, which dives into the water ; in its place Gottfried, the heir to the Duchy, rushes to his sister's arms. Lohengrin springs into the boat, which then departs up the river drawn by the dove.

The *dramatis personæ* are three. Of these Lohengrin himself forms, or should form if the representation is adequate, the centre round which everything is grouped ; his glory should fill the entire scene. Every means have been employed by the composer to this end : his imposing arrival, his silver armour, his chivalrous bearing and noble courtesy, his gentleness and tenderness towards Elsa, and, above all, the martial, clear-cut phrases of his music, all contribute to the lustre which he sheds over the whole. The greatest temptation to the singer is to overdo the part, to represent him as semi-divine. Thus in the fight with Telramund as sometimes seen he abstains from defending himself, as if relying upon miraculous powers. This is a fatal misconception ; he is before all else human, a minister indeed of the divine Grail, but still only an exalted human being.

Elsa's character needs no elucidation ; she is perfectly clear. Her essence lies in her youth, her sincerity and uncontaminated innocence. To call her, as one critic has done, a colourless heroine, seems to me to show utter want of all poetic feeling.

Ortrud, the third real character of the drama, is more

complex. She represents the old Germanic heathendom, an order which now, at the time in which the drama is laid, is passing away. She is "a woman who knows not love; a political woman."

Of some of the faults of the work I have already spoken. They are especially in the text; Wagner's fluency in writing facile rhymes is too little under control, and he frequently descends to commonplace. The choruses are gorgeous in themselves, but they remain choruses, and as they do not further the action they become tedious. By reducing or omitting them altogether and concentrating upon the workings of the heroine's mind under the domination of Ortrud while excising all irrelevant matter, he would have produced a work equal to the greatest of his creations.

As *Lohengrin* is a transitional work it will be convenient here to consider for a moment the nature of the formal changes which Wagner is now introducing into the opera.

The drama is a representation of human life. Now life is a continuous stream, not a succession of detached scenes; on the stage, however, it is necessarily cut up into sections—act and scenes—the violence thus done to its continuity being necessitated by the exigencies of dramatic representation. In the spoken drama this matters little; provided the scenes are well selected and designed the continuity is easily supplied by the mind of the hearer. But in the old opera, where the dramatic interest is controlled by the musical, the process of disintegration is carried much farther. Here everything has to be brought within the limits of certain closed musical forms, and only those scenes can be utilised the essentially lyrical character of which enables them to be expressed in such forms. These lyrical episodes obviously do not make up the whole of human life, or even the greater part of it; the moments of emotional exaltation only occur at rare intervals, and are separated by long trains of seemingly monotonous routine in which the emotional element is in abeyance, but which really contain the whole of the active dramatic interest. The

difficulty in the opera was how to treat this framework of narrative incident necessary to justify the emotional lyrical moments of the drama. In the Italian opera it was met by the use of *recitativo secco;* in the German *Singspiel* by the awkward method of using spoken language, or by the device of melodrama, where the words are spoken to an accompaniment of musical instruments. In all of these the two elements, the emotional and the logical, are sharply separated, and for elucidation I have so treated them, but the separation is unnatural; in actual life emotion and action are inextricably interwoven; the stream is a continual ebb and flow, and in the drama, although at any moment one or the other may predominate, neither is ever altogether absent.

Just so it is with Wagner's music; it is always melodious, and always strictly rhythmic. There is not a bar in his maturer works which is not musically interesting in itself; there is no "padding." But the melody ebbs and flows, being at times more emotional, at times subsiding into dry explanatory narrative, never exclusively one or the other. And it is continuous, not marked by cadence or break of any sort throughout the scene. Thus in the place of the unnatural alternation of attractive arias, cavatinas, ensembles, choruses, etc., on which the hearer concentrated his attention, with dull recitatives during which he might go to sleep or converse with his neighbour, we have a continual stream of melody, no part of which can be neglected without loss to the whole.

The spoken recitative was first devised by the inventors of the opera in about 1600, and has not since changed its character in any essential feature.[1] Gluck gave it musical value, which was thoroughly appreciated by Mozart. The modern performances of Mozart's operas under Richard Strauss in the *Residenztheater* at Munich were a revelation to many of us. Here no strict *tempo* was observed; the words were sung with the natural speaking voice of rapid conversation, the accompanist-conductor striking the chords on the piano

[1] A chain of examples from leading composers from Peri to Wagner will be found in W. S. Rockstro's article on *Recitative* in Grove's *Dictionary of Music*. The whole article may be read with advantage.

in their proper places. Wagner's method is different. In the letter to Liszt quoted earlier in this chapter Wagner insists upon the prescribed *tempo* being strictly followed. Elsewhere he says, referring especially to *Tannhäuser*, " In my opera there is no difference between so-called *declaimed* and *sung* phrases ; my declamation is song and my song declamation." [1] A perusal of the score of *Lohengrin* will show that the music in the quasi-recitative portions exactly renders the natural rhetorical cadence of the voice in animated speech. Anyone may convince himself of this by reading the text aloud with rather exaggerated accent ; this is better than hearing it sung, as unless the singer is very musical he may distort the melody. The words, being written in verse, fall naturally into their places in the musical bars.

Those who care to pursue the subject further will find an excellent guide in Maurice Kufferath's monograph on *Lohengrin*. [2] The author discusses the work scene by scene and compares it with another opera, Weber's *Euryanthe*, in which the composer was working for reforms on very similar lines to Wagner, but failed, mainly owing to the incompetence of his librettist. But to learn the true significance of Wagner's reforms we must go farther back than Weber. The opera, deliberately invented as a fashionable entertainment, is a false scent drawn across the trail. It was, indeed, a perfectly sincere endeavour for a worthy end, but developed a stunted growth because it had no root in human nature. Its initial faults remained until after a lingering existence it died, a decrepit caricature. The true origin of the modern drama is in the medieval miracle plays and pageants : " It is not too much to say that in the responses and antiphonies of her services, in the processions within the church and outside of it, in the change of persons and dresses during the service, in the alternation of the recitative (*dicere*) and the choir (*cantare*), in the scenic imitations of the cradle and all its accompaniments at Bethlehem, in this and much else of the same kind there lay already the fruitful germs of the drama that should be." [3]

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, v. 128. [2] Paris, Librairie Fischbacher.
[3] R. C. Trench, *Calderon.*

CHAPTER XIV

REVOLUTION AND FLIGHT

It has been said of Ruskin: "He was a man whose sense of the moral unity of the world was so passionate that it impelled him to verify and expound it in one human activity after another, because, unless related to that central unity, all activities become meaningless, and in time degenerate. The essence of his whole thoughts about art and about society is that art and industry are not specialisms at all, but the expression in different forms of the faith which rules in men's minds, and therefore finds its visible embodiment in their labours and their social organisation."[1]

Ruskin fought against the evils of modern industrialism, Wagner against those of a privileged bureaucracy, but fundamentally both evils are the same; they are both forms of the reign of ignorance and selfishness and stupidity over earnestness and efficiency. To Wagner as to Ruskin was applied the dictum *ne sutor ultra crepidam*, as it had been applied to Goethe before them; of both, as of Goethe, it is true that many of their utterances for which in their lifetime they suffered ridicule and contempt became the commonplaces of later times. "I revolted," Wagner said later, "from love, not from envy or vexation"; and again: "What I sought in such apparently remote regions as State and Religion was my art and my art alone."[2] We now find him in the years 1848–49 searching for some higher ideal than self-interest and hatred, and he found it in art, in the Grail and in Jesus of Nazareth; but first, as a preliminary to these, in the subversion of

[1] R. H. Tawney in *The Observer*.

[2] *Ges. Schr.*, viii. 4.

existing social institutions. Of his attitude to the society around him he writes:

> My inner mood was in direct opposition to the public office which I held. I retired more and more into myself; there was only one person (Röckel) with whom I held intimate converse. My only desire was to be left alone to compose in undisturbed seclusion; the craving for intelligible communication, necessary though it was, scarcely troubled me. But my desire for solitude was not egoistic; I did not seek it; it was revealed to me by the barrenness of my own surroundings.[1]

Political ferment had long been rife in Europe before the fateful year 1848. The historical events of the revolutionary epoch are well known. It began in Paris, with the resignation of Guizot and the abdication of the Orleans King. Thence it rapidly spread through Europe, to Vienna and Berlin, where the King Friedrich Wilhelm IV. nipped it in the bud, as far as his country was concerned, by timely but insincere concessions. In Saxony, for the moment, it passed over with no more serious disturbance than the fall of a ministry. The inauguration of the Frankfort Parliament to legislate for a united Germany raised enthusiastic hopes destined never to be fulfilled.

Wagner has often been blamed for the share which he is supposed to have borne in the revolutionary movement in Saxony. The revolution was a mistake, because it failed. In itself it was a most honourable movement, inspired by the highest motives. Those in England who condemn revolution as such forget that our own liberties were founded by revolution. In Germany in 1848 it was a revolt against the tyranny of sovereigns ruling by the fiction of divine right, with its corollary that the people exist for the sake of the ruler, and not the ruler for his people. It was approved, and to a large extent actively supported, by all the more respectable elements of the community except the court nobility, against whom it was specially directed, and a minority of tradesmen

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iv. 302.

who feared injury to their businesses from civil commotion. Officers, parsons, lawyers and other professional men figure among the ranks of its adherents.

Saxony in the spring of 1848 was seething with discontent, which found expression in pamphlets, meetings, petitions. There was one serious schism among the malcontents. While the extremist majority were for the abolition of the monarchy, a smaller, more moderate party wished to retain it under constitutional safeguards. An association called the *Vaterlandsverein* was formed, and soon numbered in Saxony some 30,000 citizens as its members. Wagner joined it at first, partly in order to watch events, partly influenced by his friend Röckel, who was an active member. He was warmly attached to the person of his sovereign, and hoped to exert a moderating influence upon the assembly and to divert the hostility of the extremists from the King to the real culprits, the reactionary nobility, who held all the higher offices in the State. A proposal had been made to rescind the grant for the Court Theatre in the Civil List. Wagner's only interest was in the welfare of art, and primarily of the arts which he represented, the drama and music; these he held to be a matter of national rather than of private concern. He held firmly with the dictum of the Emperor Joseph II.: "The theatre shall have no other purpose than the ennobling of taste and morals (Sitten)"; that is to say, the theatre is not to be a place of entertainment, but rather a school of ethics, and as such must be placed under the control of the entire community. In this sense Wagner prepared an elaborate report,[1] proposing drastic reforms in the constitution of the theatre, discussing them in as full detail as he had formerly discussed his proposed reforms in the orchestra. These proposals were fully in harmony with the democratic spirit of the revolutions; the most vital point, apart from practical details, was the abolition of the Court appointment of *Intendant*, and the entrustment of the supreme authority to the hands of a director elected by the community

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, ii. 233.

by all the active members of the theatrical company, and of other national associations representing music and literature, thus converting the theatre into a national institution instead of a Court function. One cannot help remarking the sober and practical tendency of these documents, and of the proposals which they embody, devised at a time when the wildest excesses were the order of the day, and the most visionary schemes were hailed as panaceas for every evil. Amongst other matters the scheme contemplated the establishment of a national training-school, at which persons intending to become actors and singers should receive a thorough technical and general education before entering upon their profession. Such a report could not be sent through the regular official channel, that is through the *Intendant*, whose office its first object was to abolish. Wagner therefore applied to the Minister of the Interior, von Oberländer, and obtained from him an interview. He advised Wagner to entrust the project to a private member of the House of Representatives.

On June 15th Wagner read a paper before the *Vaterlandsverein* on the attitude of Republicanism to the Monarchy.[1] It is a reasoned review of the political situation in Saxony, with proposals for the future form of Government, and was designed to moderate the tendencies of extremists and to secure the throne by curbing the power of the nobility. Its general purport is that Saxony shall be declared a republic *by a decree of the King himself*, "the first and truest of all republicans":

> Not one of us can be so genuine a republican as the prince; each is forced by the stress of every day life to divide up his labours into numberless fragments, but the prince's efforts cannot be divided; they belong to the whole. . . . We are republicans; the achievements of our time have brought the republic close before us, but the *name* is fraught with offence and danger; one word of our prince will dispel both. Let the republic be proclaimed, not by us, but by the prince, the noblest, the worthiest king; let him but say: "I declare Saxony to be a free state."

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, xii. 218. It is Englished in my translation of Chamberlain's *Richard Wagner*, in an Appendix.

The address had appeared unsigned in a local print on the evening before it was delivered. To judge his action rightly we must bear in mind the condition of Europe at the moment. In almost every country people had risen in frenzy against their rulers; they knew no restraint, and no right was acknowledged but that of the strongest. Thrones were tottering, and the lives of their occupiers were threatened. Wagner was no vulgar agitator seeking revolution for personal ends; he had read deeply in the history of his country, and pondered over its genius. He was not indeed an "economist" as the word is commonly understood in orthodox circles, that is to say, not one who tries to patch up the shattered fragments of a rotten edifice; he looked to the foundations that he might rebuild the whole structure, and no man knew better what was wanted. The more one reads his writings the more one is struck with the political wisdom which they express.

But though his intention was pacific the actual effect of his address was the very opposite; it brought the storm down upon his own head. It was just what his enemies desired, an overt act which could be construed into one of disloyalty. The nobility, who had the ear of the King, were not likely to neglect the occasion, and Wagner was thenceforth regarded in Court circles as the most dangerous of revolutionaries; his guilt was aggravated by the fact of his being a Court official. The uproar was tremendous. Abusive notices and lampoons appeared in the newspapers, and he allowed himself to be irritated into printing a reply in a similar strain. He wrote to von Lüttichau a lengthy defence of his action and asked for a fortnight's leave until the storm should have subsided. A movement was set on foot among the members of the orchestra to petition the King for his removal from his post; it was, however, forestalled by a deputation headed by Theodor Uhlig, a young and very talented violinist, protesting against intrigues of such a kind. The petition was, however, sent in and was laid before the King, who gave it a cold reception, and reminded the signatories that the appointment and dismissal of the *Hofkapellmeister* rested with himself, and

that he would brook no interference. Wagner was overjoyed, and full of gratitude for the support which von Lüttichau had given to him in the crisis. For a moment a reconciliation between them seemed possible, but it was not to be; he had gone too far, and the burden of his debts was still the perpetual hindrance to his career. So far he had accomplished nothing towards the satisfaction of his creditors. In a letter to Liszt he states their claims against him at 5,000 thalers (£750); others place them higher. He went to Vienna, where he stayed for a few weeks and even contemplated settling there. Everything was being re-organised in consequence of the recent disturbances. The old Kärnthnerthor Theater, famous from its associations, was in dissolution, and Wagner was ready with a project for its re-organisation. He was seeking a new field for himself, lest his position in Dresden should become untenable. The party of the Court nobility, whom he had mortally offended, was now in the ascendant, and Röckel actually received notice of dismissal. A little later, in August, Wagner went to Weimar on a short visit to Liszt, now settled there permanently with the Princess Wittgenstein.[1]

In the midst of the turmoil, in March, Wagner completed the score of *Lohengrin*, but although approved by von Lüttichau, it was not given at the Opera-house, owing to the disfavour into which he had fallen at the Court.[2] It was first produced

[1] Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, a Polish lady possessed of enormous wealth in estates in the Ukraine, was born in 1819. At seventeen she was married for political reasons to Fürst Wittgenstein, a worthless spendthrift of German family. The marriage proved unhappy, and she was persecuted by the Tsar Nicholas I. on account of her Polish nationality and her strong Catholic sympathies. In the revolutionary year 1848 she fled from Russia to Weimar and placed herself under the protection of the Grand Duchess Maria Paulovna, the sister of the Tsar, intending to obtain a divorce from her husband and to marry Liszt, whom she had known in Russia, and to whom she was passionately attached. Instead of granting the divorce the autocratic Tsar sequestrated her estates, leaving her penniless. All the efforts of the Grand Duchess on her behalf proving fruitless, Liszt went to live with her at the Altenburg in Weimar. After his death in 1886 she survived him only a few months. Her daughter, the Princess Marie von Wittgenstein, was at this time (1848) aged eleven. She lived with her mother and afterwards married Prince Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst. For the sequel see Chapter XIX.

[2] *M. L.* 450.

n Weimar by Liszt two years later. In September the finale f the first act was performed at a concert commemorating he three-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the rchestra. The speech which he delivered on this occasion s published in his collected works.[1] Two noteworthy guests vere present, Madame Schröder-Devrient, now broken in body nd in mind, and Heinrich Marschner.

Even before *Lohengrin* was completed he began to occupy imself with fresh dramatic projects. He was first attracted o the Nibelungen myth through his reading in the Royal ibrary in Dresden. He had, of course, long been familiar with the German version of the story, the thirteenth-century *Nibelungenlied*, but it had brought him no inspiration. He now came to know the far finer Icelandic tradition. At the same time he was making extensive researches in early German history of the period of the Hohenstaufen Emperors, thus studying myth and history side by side. He was determined o solve once for all the crucial problem of history *versus* myth as subjects for the drama, and he decided in favour of myth. He arrived at his theories, not by reflection, but through he necessities of actual practical composition. It is quite a wrong view to suppose that Wagner ever composed according o a theoretical scheme. When engaged in the practice of composition he was guided by his sense of poetic propriety alone; his theories were devised afterwards. He produced two sketches, one dealing with the mythical hero Siegfried or Sigurd,[2] the other with the historical Friedrich Barbarossa.[3] The former, the final chapter of which he worked out into a complete tragedy entitled *Siegfried's Tod*,[4] developed later nto *Der Ring des Nibelungen;* the other, which was to have been a spoken drama in rhymed popular verse after the model of the Middle-High-German epic, was dropped. Another outcome of his reading was an essay on early German history and myth entitled *Die Wibelungen*.[5] It is an endeavour to

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, ii. 229.
[2] *Ib.*, ii. 156.
[3] *Ib.*, xi. 270.
[4] *Ib.*, ii. 167.
[5] *Ib.*, ii. 115.

found history upon myth. History, he says, anticipating modern historians, must be of peoples, not of kings and dynasties. Starting from the assumption that the unsophisticated myth-making *Volk* is always truthful and knows its own mind, while the professed chronicler is apt unconsciously to be misled into speculative theory, he insists that myth is a safer source for history than written documents. He accepts the equation of C. W. Göttling, a writer of note in his day :

Nibelung = Wibelung = Ghibellino

which he says holds good provided the change n > w can be satisfactorily explained—a rather bold proviso, which will scarcely satisfy modern scholars. On this assumption Wagner seeks to unfold the early history of the German people.

Yet another sketch which he now produced was the outcome of ethic rather than of æsthetic reflection. He was now thirty-six ; he had outlived the fantastic optimism of his youth, and had learned to see the world as it is. He found a parallel to the social conditions of his time in the infamy and corruption of the early Roman Empire. Amidst its sordid villainy he discerned one bright ray in the sacrifice of love, embodied in the holy figure of Jesus of Nazareth, pointing the way to redemption. The full sketch, which is now published,[1] is accompanied by an elaborate commentary, notes for the dialogue and Biblical references. It is noteworthy as being the first indication of his sympathy with the Christian religion, which had so strong a hold upon him in his later life. The subject was given up as quite unsuited to the times.

So far *Tannhäuser* had attracted little attention outside of Dresden. The Princess Wittgenstein had heard it there, and brought back such a glowing account to Liszt that he chose it for the celebration of the Grand Duchess' birthday on February 16th, with Tichatschek in the title-rôle. It was a courageous act, for not only had Liszt to overcome the bitter opposition of the Court circle at Weimar, but by entering the lists for Wagner he offended his friends Meyerbeer and

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, xi. 273.

especially Berlioz, who expected his own opera *Benvenuto Cellini* to be given on that occasion. It was a splendid success.

The early months of 1849 were a time of considerable literary activity. Röckel, now a deputy in the chamber, had, after losing his post at the opera, started a weekly periodical called *Volksblätter*, to which Wagner contributed a red-hot article on "Revolution."[1] These and other articles are now published with his other works. They all have a political tendency, even when dealing with art or literature.

At the general rehearsal of the Ninth Symphony on Palm Sunday, 1849, there was present a man with whom he soon came into very close intimacy, and who exerted a powerful influence upon him through the extraordinary magnetism of his personality. The career of Mikhail Bakunin, the leading spirit of the European revolutions, is well known, and only concerns us in its relation to Wagner. He was then under the ban of the police, but went about fearlessly *incognito*, staying with Röckel in the house opposite to Wagner. He came up after the rehearsal and spoke in enthusiastic words of the music which he had just heard. He, too, was filled with indignation at the social conditions around him, and their incompatibility with moral ideals. It is said that in his disgust with society he would have turned musician. Bakunin was made of very different material from Wagner. He aimed at nothing less than the total destruction of all civilisation, and shrank from no means to accomplish that end. They saw each other at home and went for walks together. He took Wagner's measure at once and found him useless for his purposes. With inimitable humour Wagner relates how, in the midst of his occupation with the divine story of the redemption of mankind he listened, awe-struck and fascinated, to the savage projects of the anarchist. Vainly Wagner strove to interest him in his own schemes for regeneration; he waved them all aside. Art like all else must go in the general ruin!

With the actual events of the revolution we can deal

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, xii. 243.

shortly. Its ostensible cause was the refusal of the Saxon Government under Prussian influence to accept the *Reichsverfassung*, or Imperial Constitution, proposed by the Frankfort Parliament. In February the reactionary von Beust was appointed Foreign Minister; on April 30th he dissolved the Chamber. On May 2nd a public demonstration in favour of the Constitution was prohibited; on the 3rd the revolution began with an attack of the mob on the *Zeughaus*, in which several people were killed. On the 4th the King fled with the Ministry to the fortress of Königstein, and a provisional Government was set up by the revolutionists. On the 6th the Old Theatre (not Semper's *Hoftheater*) was burnt down; from the 5th to the 8th there was continual street-fighting, Bakunin reigning supreme and giving orders to fire everything until order was at last restored by the advance of the Prussian troops called in by the Saxon Government. The members of the provisional revolutionary government either fled or surrendered, and the revolution was at an end.

Wagner's share in the fighting used once to be the subject of heated controversy. He was represented as having been one of the leaders, as having himself defended the barricades, as having lighted the fire which destroyed the old Opera-house, and much more. Count von Beust later taxed him directly with having instigated a project for setting fire to the *Prinzenpalais*, asserting that the proofs were in his possession. The whole question of Wagner's conduct during the hostilities has been thoroughly investigated long ago by Dr. Hugo Dinger,[1] who had access to the official archives of the Saxon police. We have now a very full account by Wagner himself of his doings from day to day in his *Autobiography* published in 1911. The two accounts mutually support each other in all essentials. It is definitely proved that Wagner took no active share whatever in the fighting. Semper did; Semper, the architect and engineer, laid out the barricades scientifically and assisted in

[1] *R. Wagners geistige Entwickelung*, chap. iii. The evidence has been collected by Dr. G. H. Müller in a pamphlet, *R. Wagner und die Mai-Revolution*, Dresden, 1919.

their defence, but Wagner is never once named in the official accounts; he spent the time wandering about the streets unarmed, visiting every point of interest, closely observing all that happened, discussing high questions of art or theology with casual acquaintances on the top of the *Kreuzkirche* tower, while the cannon were booming and the musketry rattling below. All the day-time and for one whole night he was absent from his home where his wife and other female relations were cowering. On the second day, when there was a pause in the fighting and rumours were about of foreign troops to be called in against the revolutionaries, he hurriedly caused placards to be printed and affixed in conspicuous places or distributed among the Saxon troops with the words: "Are you with us against foreign troops?" an act which, however praiseworthy in itself was a grave military offence, for which it is a wonder that he was not at once arrested and shot. This was his only overt act. It was not revolutionary; it was provoked by the shameful act of the Government in summoning foreign troops against his fellow-countrymen. The insurgents made a brave defence, but their case was hopeless in face of the Prussian troops which were pouring into the city. Röckel was captured. On the 7th Wagner took his wife with her dog and cockatoo for safety to Chemnitz, where his brother-in-law Wolfram was living after his retirement from the stage. He himself returned to Dresden, and was in the company of the provisional government until their flight on the 9th. They went to Freiberg and thence on to Chemnitz, where Heubner and Bakunin were captured. Wagner, now realising how widely their ideals differed from his, had refused their invitation to accompany them. He drove to Chemnitz alone, and so escaped capture. But there was no safety for him in Saxony, and he was sent off as speedily as possible to Weimar. Wolfram accompanied him in the carriage as far as Altenburg, the departure being managed with such secrecy that the driver himself knew nothing of there being a second passenger inside.

That Wagner's share in the revolution has been grossly

exaggerated by his enemies in order to bring obloquy upon his name is now certain. Why then, it will be asked, if he had done nothing wrong did he flee? The answer is that if he did not partake in the fighting he was deeply compromised in other ways. His *Vaterlandsverein* speech, however he intended it himself, was looked upon as highly inflammatory; his article on "Revolution" was certainly so. Throughout the disturbances and for some time before he had regularly consorted with revolutionaries, and by his action with the placards—possibly too in other ways—he had seriously committed himself. He was himself in considerable doubt as to how far he was involved, and as to what his legal position would be if he returned to Dresden and allowed himself to be arrested and tried on a criminal charge; with the strong animus prevailing against him among the upper classes there was little likelihood of his receiving a fair trial; he would probably have been condemned to death, as Röckel actually was, though the sentence was afterwards commuted to imprisonment.

On reaching Weimar on the 13th he found Liszt expecting him. He had promised to be present at the forthcoming representation of *Tannhäuser*. Only confused accounts had reached Weimar of the doings in Dresden, and Liszt was not a little embarrassed to find that he was receiving a political refugee. Wagner seems even then to have thought that eventually, when things had quieted down, he would return to his duties in Dresden. So little did he realise his position that he actually asked to be introduced at the Weimar Court. At his own request he met and conversed with the Grand Duchess Marie Paulovna.[1]

Minna had in the meantime returned from Chemnitz to Dresden. On the 15th a superior officer of the police called to inform her that a warrant had been issued for her husband's arrest, and would come into force three days from that date. This procedure was probably due to some friendly police official or member of the Government to allow him time to

[1] Ramann, *Franz Liszt*, ii. (2), p. 60.

escape, for the Weimar Government was bound to hand him over if called upon to do so by Saxony. Minna therefore wrote to him in haste in Weimar under cover to Liszt, urging instant flight ; what was her consternation on receiving a reply describing the comfortable quarters that he had found in Weimar and asking her to join him. Again she wrote imploring him not to lose a moment ; his next letter was about the beautiful country around, and the delightful walks that they would have together. Her letters had not been delivered owing to Liszt's absence from home. On the 19th, the very day fixed for the *Tannhäuser* performance, the warrant was issued for his arrest " on account of active participation in the recent rebellion," and was published in the Dresden newspapers. Liszt having then returned, Minna's letters were delivered. Wagner was secretly hurried off to Magdala, a village in the neighbourhood, where he remained for a few days in hiding. On the 22nd, his thirty-sixth birthday, Minna arrived to bid him farewell, returning on the following day to Dresden. On the 24th he walked to Jena ; on the 25th he started on his perilous journey, provided with a false passport, intending to find his way to Paris through Switzerland. He travelled via Coburg and Lichtenfels to the Lake of Constance, where he took a steamer to Rohrschach, and thence went on by rail to Zurich, which he reached safely on the 28th.

After he left Dresden a friend came to his desolated home. He found Minna alone, and the cockatoo still uttering his wonted cry : " Richard ! Richard ! Freiheit ! "

CHAPTER XV

FIRST PERIOD OF EXILE—ZURICH

"With nothing can I compare the feeling of satisfaction which filled me when, after the first painful experiences were surmounted, I felt myself free from the world of tormenting, unfulfilled wishes—free from the conditions in which those wishes had been my only, consuming, nourishment. Persecuted, driven from my country, I was now no longer bound by any consideration to any sort of lie."[1] Again, on being assured that he could accomplish nothing except either with money or by making himself feared he replied jocularly: "Money I have none; but I have an intense desire to practise artistic terrorism."

Such were the words of a man driven from a post of honour and comfort, proscribed in the Fatherland which he loved, ruined, without one discernible ray of hope for recovery; one, too, who loved luxury, and who knew but too well what starvation in a foreign country meant. History tells of others who, when all was lost showed the same indomitable spirit; men to whom this world and all that it offers have been as nothing beside the light that was within them. They are the heroes of will; they it is who have left their impress upon humanity. The flame in Wagner's breast was his art; to keep that bright he cared not though he himself should perish. In the same vein he had written in 1842 during the negotiations for *Rienzi*, on which his all depended: "I am less concerned about how it is received than about how it is performed."[2] Of course it is clear that, as his friends used to say, "he

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iv. 334.

[2] Letter to Fischer of February 5th.

was his own enemy," that "he was beyond all help"; these are the commonplaces of the censors of genius. Wagner had no claim to the ἀρετὴ δημοτικὴ καὶ πολιτικὴ of the smug, self-satisfied citizen whose highest desire is to live a quiet, undisturbed existence, in whom the falsehood and hypocrisy of the world around him arouses no indignant protest, the *Weltschmerz* no passionate cry of agonised sympathy. Genius does not act by the strict laws of propriety and logic; it strikes like the lightning where it will, shattering all that stands in its way, good and bad alike, and perishes itself; but its work endures for the joy and well-being of men, who then besmirch the hand of their benefactor. Such is the universal tragedy of genius. But he needs none of our compassion; the man who created *Tristan* and *Parsifal* lived in a world of truth and happiness which to weaker minds is no more than a distant vision of superterrestrial bliss.

In Zurich Wagner found an old friend, Alexander Müller, a musician whom he had known in Würzburg, a married man with two little girls; though living in humble circumstances, he offered Wagner the hospitality of his home. But Wagner made no stay in Switzerland. Liszt had advised him to go to Paris, where he would be befriended by his own influential secretary, Belloni. His condition was indeed desperate. Liszt was ready to do what lay in his power, but he had no means of his own. Since giving up his career as a *virtuoso* he was entirely dependent upon the very meagre salary of a *Holfkapellmeister* in a small capital, and he had to support his mother and a family of three children in Paris.[1] His influence was indeed enormous, but he could only beg from others, and those to whom he would most naturally turn, the royal personages, were just those whom Wagner had most deeply offended. He fought, however, manfully for Wagner's cause. He wrote a short account of *Tannhäuser* and had it published in the *Journal des Débats*, headed by a few kindly words from Berlioz. In it he hinted that the *Académie* might

[1] His official salary in Weimar was 1,000 thalers, to which the Grand Duke added 300 thalers from his private purse, in all, therefore, £195.

include the overture in one of its programmes. He also wrote a strong letter in Wagner's behalf to Belloni. His plan was that, after winning over Chorley, Wagner should go to London and obtain a performance of *Lohengrin*. There was every likelihood of his gaining a decided success, which would prepare the way for his return to Paris. But Liszt had reckoned without his host; Wagner was in no mood for courting either Paris or London, both of which he looked upon as the very breeding-places of all that was most revolting to him. "To offer my wares in that market? No, that is impossible!" Rather would he retire to some German village and there work to the utmost of his powers. He gave way, however, in so far as to enter into some desultory negotiations, which came to nothing. He went to Paris in the beginning of June and stayed there until the end of the month, meeting many of his old acquaintances, Kietz and Anders and—Meyerbeer. Belloni was kindness itself; to be near him Wagner took a small room at Reuil on the Seine, some way out of Paris. Liszt's article had made a great impression, and it was generally expected that *Tannhäuser* would be given at one of the opera-houses. Several of his Dresden friends, revolutionary refugees like himself, had fled to Paris; he met there Gottfried Semper and Wilhelm Heine, the son of his old friend, then a young theatrical painter, afterwards famous as a traveller, author and finally a general in the American Federal Army.

On returning to Zurich he was again received by the hospitable Müller. The hardest blow of all had fallen upon him while he was in France. He had since his flight repeatedly written to Minna in Dresden, but had received no reply. On June 19th a letter arrived announcing her intention to live apart from him in the future. She had strongly disapproved of his conduct in Dresden; it appeared to her like sheer madness, and for some time there had been a coolness between them, but he was not prepared for a complete breach; for however she might differ from him in her ideals, however intensely he felt the strain of being bound to one whose every act, every word, was bitterly opposed to all that he held sacred, however

he had wounded her with his hasty retorts, he was absolutely dependent upon her. Far more than most men he needed those undefinable services which a woman alone could give to a man of delicate sensibility. He seems to have left Minna's letter unanswered. A month later she repented her decision and promised to join him in Switzerland as soon as she could dispose of her furniture and obtain funds for the journey. Frantic with joy and excitement, Wagner wrote to Liszt imploring him to help her. Liszt obtained a contribution of 100 thalers (£15) from "an anonymous admirer of *Tannhäuser*," whom we now know to have been the hereditary Grand Duke Karl Alexander of Weimar. In the beginning of September she arrived with her daughter Natalie, her dog "Peps," and her cockatoo "Papo," and they set up house in Hottingen, an outlying suburb of Zurich, in Hintere Eschenhäuser 182. Through Müller Wagner made acquaintance with many of the local residents, among whom the most noteworthy was Jakob Sulzer, a young official of high culture and marked ability. There was a considerable German community in Zurich, whither many Saxons who had compromised themselves by the revolution had taken refuge, but he disliked their Philistine propensities, and was more drawn to the older inhabitants.

In the hope of earning something towards the support of himself and his wife he again turned to literature. While staying with Müller he had written an essay entitled *Die Kunst und die Revolution*,[1] the first of the memorable writings of his Zurich period, intending to publish it simultaneously in France and in Germany. From France the MS. was returned as unsuitable; in Germany it was accepted by the publisher Wigand in Leipzig. He also revised for publication by Wigand his treatise of the previous year, *Die Wibelungen*.[2] In addition to these literary projects he arranged with his Dresden friend Uhlig for the piano transcription of *Lohengrin*. From this time begins his warm correspondence with Uhlig. Liszt seems

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iii. 8. [2] *Ib.*, ii. 115.

to have become rather alarmed at his renewed literary activity, and gently advised him to abstain from "political commonplaces and socialist galimatias," and not to write in a way that must necessarily bring him into collision with those who were able to hinder his progress—much as Emerson might have written to Carlyle. Liszt also hinted that he might appropriately dedicate his *Tannhäuser* to the hereditary Grand Duke Karl Alexander, the Lord of the Wartburg. Rightly to appreciate the character of Liszt's friendship for Wagner we must bear in mind the relative position of the two artists. Liszt, himself an aristocrat, the petted child of the highest social circles, influential with nearly every Court in Europe, might well have posed as the patron or protector of the obscure plebeian. Instead of this his letters are all written in the tone of a humble admirer and disciple. He says little about his own compositions; all his care is to further the cause of his idol.

It was at this time that Wagner was attracted by the writings of Ludwig Feuerbach, a philosophic writer whose lectures at Heidelberg during the revolutionary years had earned for him a transient celebrity. Among his publications was one entitled *Die Philosophie der Zunkuft.* Wagner's first pamphlet was followed up by another, which he called *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft,*[1] and dedicated to Feuerbach. The title was fastened upon by one of his enemies in the German press, Herr Bischoff, editor of the *Rheinische Musikzeitung,* who in ridicule dubbed Wagner's operas *Zukunftsmusik,* "Music of the Future." The notion that Wagner had himself bestowed the title on his compositions is an error; it was simply a copy of that of Feuerbach. It was afterwards adopted triumphantly by Liszt and his school at Weimar, and became famous.[2] In connection with the treatise Wagner wrote a

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iii. 42.

[2] Lina Ramann claims the invention of the name for the Princess Wittgenstein. She relates that Franz Brendel, the editor of the *Neue Zeitschr.*, in a company at the Altenburg remarked that the music of *Lohengrin* was too advanced for the public of that day. "Then, exclaimed the Princess, "let us call it Music of the Future." The name was at once hailed and enthusiastically adopted by Liszt and von Bülow for what was then known as the Weimar School.

complete dramatic sketch for an opera intended for Paris, *Wieland der Schmiedt.*[1] It is the story of Wayland Smith, altered and arranged for the stage.

Wagner's genius was fully appreciated in Zurich; he was looked up to and respected as much on account of his political attitude as for his artistic works. Switzerland was all on the side of the revolution. When Minna in her stupid way said something about her husband's "follies" having brought them to ruin Frau Müller replied that that was just why they honoured him. His conversational gifts alone were sufficient to make him popular in every society that he entered. Nor were the residents of Zurich backward in giving him aid of the kind that he most needed; a friend advanced him 300 guldens (£25) on the score of *Lohengrin*, and he was asked to read his plays before a public audience for a liberal remuneration. Minna was now at her best; in housekeeping on the smallest possible means she was without a rival. His knot of Dresden friends remained staunch, and he carried on a brisk correspondence with Uhlig, Fischer and Heine. Timely and unexpected financial aid reached him from a lady whom personally he had scarcely known. We remember the two brothers, Karl and Alexander Ritter, schoolfellows of von Bülow when he called upon Wagner in 1846 in Gross Graupe. When von Bülow left Dresden soon afterwards the two Ritters remained in Dresden with their mother, a widowed lady with whom Wagner seems to have become slightly acquainted. Through the Ritters he came to know a young English lady, named Jessie Taylor, who was then studying music in Dresden and shared their enthusiasm, living with her mother, a lady of considerable means. Jessie was soon afterwards married to a wealthy Frenchman of Bordeaux named Laussot, and the two ladies, Frau Ritter and Madame Laussot, hearing that Wagner was exiled and was living in poverty in Switzerland, determined to subscribe together and to provide him with an income of 3,000 francs (£120) sufficient to meet his most pressing

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iii. 178.

necessities. A little later Frau Ritter undertook the payments herself, for which she was denounced by the Saxon police as supporting a rebel.

The Paris-London project was still in his mind, but he never had much liking for it. He felt instinctively that to have any hope of success in a great capital he must change his nature and be other than he was ; instead of following his ideals he must supply what was wanted by a public which he cordially despised. To write operas of the *Rienzi* type would have been easy for him, and would have brought him wealth, popularity, and, what he prized even more, a comfortable home for his wife, and domestic peace ; but Paris was not his field. There is a very interesting letter to his sister Clara in Chemnitz, in which he calmly reasons with an unsympathetic though well-disposed correspondent. He shows conclusively from a purely business point of view the hopelessness of Paris for a man who is provided neither with money nor with a special aptitude for pushing himself :

> The only thing which could make me really unhappy would be if external considerations should compel me to renounce the strong, imperious impulse which is part of my being. I am always cheerful when I can satisfy this, whatever privations and persecutions it may involve. I could only be depressed by anxiety for my wife, without whom I should not care to live. It is the consciousness that she is necessary to me that gives her strength, notwithstanding her disappointment with me, to endure everything with me. That is what places her so high in my heart ; my love for her is the bond which still unites me with the world, on which I should otherwise turn my back in disgust.[1]

Mainly out of deference to Liszt, and yielding to the earnest importunities of Minna he again went to Paris (January, 1850). He contemplated a drama on Achilles, and noted some jottings for it. Another plan was to dramatise his sketch of *Jesus of Nazareth*, but both were rejected as unsuitable for Paris. Then he fixed upon *Wieland der Schmiedt*, but this too came

[1] *Familienbriefe*, December 1st, 1849.

to nothing. Belloni, the only person who could have helped him, was absent; the promised performance of his *Tannhäuser* overture was postponed *sine die*, and finding his project hopeless he finally renounced the whole scheme. His letters from Paris to his wife are full of tenderness. He foresees that the failure of the Paris scheme will be a disappointment to her, and tries to break it gently that she may not lay the blame upon him. His first intention was to return at once to Zurich, but on receiving a warm invitation from the Laussots to visit them in Bordeaux he accepted it gladly and left Paris for Bordeaux on March 15th. What happened during this visit we only know from Wagner's own account. At first he was received cordially by the young couple, and pressed to make a long stay, but as time went on and the husband was necessarily absent most of the time attending to his business as a wine merchant, his wife, a gifted and cultured young woman of twenty-two, an accomplished pianist and an ardent admirer of Wagner's works, was thus thrown upon the society of her guest. There is no hint of anything more than a harmless flirtation, but the husband became jealous; the affair was magnified by gossip into a scandal, and an officious friend wrote an exaggerated account of what was going on to Wagner's wife in Zurich. He cut short his visit and returned to Paris.

Directly after reaching Bordeaux Wagner had written in the most affectionate terms to Minna saying that he wished no greater happiness than to live with her, quiet and contented in their little home. To this she replied with insulting coldness, reproaching him bitterly for having thrown over the Paris project and for having accepted "charity" instead of earning a living for himself; she forbade him to use the familiar "Du" when writing to her, as if they were henceforth to be strangers. We have not got her letter, and can only gather its substance from his reply. Quite apart from the wide gulf which separated their ideals, her attitude was altogether unjustifiable. She wanted a brilliant and immediate success, and believed that he needed only to put pen to paper and compose operas like *Rienzi* to secure a success in Paris similar to that attained by

Rienzi in Dresden, and that it was only his perverse obstinacy which prevented him from doing so. She was fatally mistaken. In Germany by humouring the public he might have reckoned upon a success, but Paris was closed to him; he would have been dependent upon theatrical managers and business agents who wanted just that which he was unable to offer.

In her letter she seems practically to have taken leave of him, at least until he could mend his ways. In the midst of all this the news of his doings in Bordeaux came to her ears. She at once jumped to the conclusion that his, to her unaccountable, abandonment of the Paris scheme was due to the attraction of Bordeaux, a conclusion which, as we know, was entirely false. She committed the fatal blunder of travelling all the way to Paris to "reclaim" her husband. Such a step could, of course, have no other result than to create a scandal out of a situation which was due to simple misunderstanding. Wagner was in Montmorency, near Paris, and learned of her arrival from Kietz, but left France on the next morning without having seen her, and went to Villeneuve, on the Lake of Geneva. On April 17th — whether before or after her journey to Paris I do not know, as the dates are not clear—he wrote her a letter, summing up severely, but not unjustly, and with full appreciation of all that she had endured for him, her uniform attitude towards him and his artistic ideals, and recognising that it was impossible for him ever to make her happy. A fortnight later, on May 4th, he wrote again in a milder tone, bidding her farewell, and announcing his intention to travel to Greece and Asia Minor, sharing his allowance equally with her during their separation.

It is impossible for me to pass over this episode in Wagner's life because of the consequences which it entailed for himself, and because it has been persistently misrepresented by his gossip-loving biographers. It was a trivial affair in itself, and had the editors of his *Autobiography* had the slightest respect for Wagner's memory they would have suppressed it entirely. As for the story there told I do not believe one half of it; he, or someone else, has worked it into a romance in the doubtful

taste of a third-rate French novel, with all the regular apparatus of neglected wife, union of souls, proposed elopement, challenge to a duel, etc. The only result of all this bathos has been to provide the reptile press of sixty or seventy years later with a substance into which to fix its venomous fangs. It is quite a wrong view to represent Minna as a faithful wife whose jealousy was excusable as proceeding from excessive love for her husband. It is impossible to follow the whole history of their life together without realising that she had not a spark of real love for him personally. All she cared about was his success, that she might appear before the world as the wife of a famous musician. He, on the other hand, loved her deeply and tenderly; every line of his letters shows how necessary she was to him, how ardently he sought to win from her that love which she was incapable of giving. The outcome of the affair was that the burden of supporting Wagner was thrown upon the shoulders of Frau Ritter alone. A short time afterwards she was able to allow him the full amount of £120 out of her own purse for five years.

How far Wagner's project of a voyage to the East was seriously contemplated it is difficult to say; it was not carried out. In Switzerland he was joined by the Ritter family, the mother making the journey from Dresden to spend a week with him. After she had left Wagner went on with the elder son, Karl, to Zermatt and thence to Thun. Through the mediation of the Ritter family a reconciliation was effected between him and his wife, and he returned to her in Zurich early in July. They set up a small household together with her daughter Natalie on the banks of the lake, Karl Ritter occupying an upper room in the same house.

During his wanderings Wagner had by a sudden impulse conceived the idea of having *Lohengrin* brought out in Weimar, and wrote to Liszt asking him to have it performed. He had sent him the score before leaving Germany. His reception of it is thus described by his biographer, Lina Ramann:

> Liszt sat at the piano in the room of the Princess (Wittgenstein) with the score of *Lohengrin* before him, singing and playing

she being seated beside him. Three days, from morning to evening, they both sat; no visitors were received; the meals were brought either by a servant or by the Princess herself, and served on a side-table.

He felt, however, some doubts about its reception with the public owing to its idealistic colouring. To arrange for the first representation of an opera of such dimensions and requiring such sumptuous scenic decorations was no small undertaking for a little place like Weimar, where funds were very limited, but Liszt and his band of artists made everything possible. He succeeded in obtaining a grant of 2,000 thalers (£300) from the budget, and at once began preparations. Wagner wrote from Switzerland elaborate instructions regarding the performance and the scenery; he at first hoped to gain permission to enter Germany for a brief visit to superintend the rehearsals and the first performance, but that was impossible. He continued in communication with Liszt up to the time of the performance, which took place on the anniversary of Goethe's birthday, August 28th. The part of "Elsa" was taken by Fräulein Agthe, that of "Telramund" by Hans Feodor von Milde. A brilliant company had assembled for the occasion. The orchestra was led by a young violinist named Joseph Joachim; amongst the audience were Hans von Bülow and his mother, the Ritter family, Joachim Raff, Fétis, the famous director of the Brussels Conservatoire and author of the *Biographie Universelle*, besides many other distinguished foreigners. It is from this performance that the beginning of Wagner's fame may be dated. Karl Ritter had been specially commissioned by the composer to report to him thereon, and he with the ardour of a youthful purist did not fail to dwell upon all the shortcomings inevitable in a first production of such strange music under such conditions. Von Bülow, however, anticipated him and wrote a juster account. Liszt also wrote in glowing terms; his admiration for the work was too great to be told in words; if he had to select he said he would do like the monk with the *Imitatio Christi*, who underlined every word, and he would begin with the duet in Act III., "the

pinnacle of all that is beautiful and true in art." Wagner, while fully appreciating the services of his Weimar friends, was dejected. He had been thoroughly alarmed by Karl Ritter's report; he heard that the performance had taken four hours and three quarters, and was determined that the *tempi* had been dragged, that the "recitatives" had been misunderstood, and much more of the kind. It is impossible not to admire Liszt's unswerving faith in Wagner, and the patience and graciousness with which he endured his querulous outpourings. Nothing from the composer of *Lohengrin* could ruffle the serenity of his even temperament. Wagner had miscalculated the time which it would take in performance, but on the subject of shortening it by excisions he was inexorable; he would rather renounce the work entirely than allow it to be mutilated. At the second performance Liszt was able to announce that not a syllable had been omitted from the work as he had written it. In the course of that winter it was given five times. Appreciative notices appeared in many of the leading musical papers of Germany and in the Paris *Journal des Débats*.

Wagner had in the meantime become connected with a temporary operatic company which had established itself in Zurich for the winter, and conducted *Freischütz* and *Don Giovanni*. He arranged that Karl Ritter should try his prentice hand at conducting under his direction. He proved a failure, but Hans von Bülow, who came to Zurich in September, at once developed an exceptional talent and shared the office with him. After two months they both left Zurich and joined another company in St. Gall, until at Easter von Bülow went to Weimar to study with Liszt. Wagner himself also conducted occasionally. Liszt was eagerly looking forward to the completion of *Siegfried's Tod*, of which the text was already finished. The absence of any hope of obtaining a performance discouraged him; he felt with bitterness that the public still misunderstood his aims, and before his art could have any chance of success the road must be prepared by a systematic exposition of his views. The essays of his first

years in Zurich and the reflection which they entailed were as necessary for the clearing of his own mind as for the education of the public. Two of them, *Die Kunst und die Revolution* and *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, have already been mentioned. In September, 1850, he published in *Die Neue Zeitschrift* an essay entitled *Das Judenthum in der Musik*. At the end of the same year, in little more than three months, he wrote his *magnum opus*, *Oper und Drama*.

Das Judenthum in der Musik[1] has, mainly owing to its personal tendency, acquired an undeserved notoriety. It has been grievously misunderstood. It is not primarily an attack on Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer. He tells us in his *Autobiography*[2] the motives which induced him to write it; he intended it as a protest against the scurrilous Jew-baiting then, as always, rampant to the great discredit of Germany, and to indicate the real significance of the Jewish element in German music. Nevertheless, his greatest admirers cannot but regret that he should have published it. It was ill-timed, in the worst possible taste, and intolerably dull. It created an almost inconceivable uproar. Wagner had it published under a false name, "R. Freigedank," and the editor and proprietor of the paper, throughout his career one of the staunchest of Wagner's supporters, heroically drew all the odium upon himself. His friends were powerless; Uhlig alone entered the lists in his support. Nearly the whole of the German press was controlled by Jews, and the battle which raged around it was renewed with redoubled violence on its re-issue in pamphlet form in 1869. It did him no harm in the end, for throughout his life Wagner had no more energetic supporters than the Jews. Nothing is more wonderful in his career than the way in which the very classes which he most violently attacked became his most active supporters. Jews, conductors, sovereign monarchs, singers, all came under his lash; all vied with each other in fighting his battles. The reason is evident; he fought not against classes as classes, but against the corruptions peculiar to each, and thus opened out

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, v. 66. [2] *Ib.*, ii. 554.

a space for the better-minded among them to breathe more freely.

Das Judenthum in der Musik is intended to explain the deep antipathy of the people towards the Jews in their relation to art. He describes the Jew as one who can originate nothing, but can only imitate the poetry or art of the people among whom he lives. Of Mendelssohn he says: "He has shown us how a Jew, equipped with the richest specific gifts, with the finest and widest culture, with an intense and delicate feeling of honour, has yet never once succeeded in producing that deep and decisive impression upon the heart and the soul which we expect from art." Wagner compares the impression which we gain on hearing his compositions to that afforded by the colours and figures of a kaleidoscope. "Only when the consciousness of his insufficiency takes possession of the composer and induces a softer feeling of resignation can he express himself characteristically. . . This is the tragedy of Mendelssohn." He does not name Meyerbeer, but speaks of a "certain other Jewish composer of wide celebrity." His case is similar; Wagner represents him as trying to exploit the ennui of his audience by offering another kind of ennui in its place. He writes works for the Paris opera intending that they shall spread to the rest of Europe, "at the present day the most certain way of gaining the reputation of an artist without being one." So long as music had any vitality as a separate art, that is down to the time of Mozart and Beethoven, there were no Jewish composers: "Not until the inner death of the body is manifest have external elements the power to take possession of it." Similarly in the days of Goethe and Schiller there were no Jewish poets; with Heinrich Heine poetry has become a lie; "he was driven restlessly by the spirit of Negation through all the illusions of modern self-deception till he lied himself into a poet." Another Jewish writer whom he criticises in a similar vein is Ludwig Börne, a rival of Heine, celebrated at the time, but who has little interest for us in England.

Ueber die Goethe-Stiftung is an article in the form of a letter to Liszt, who wished to honour the memory of his great predecessor in Weimar by founding a Goethe Institute which should offer prizes for the best contemporary works of poetry, painting, sculpture and music, and provide facilities for bringing them before the public. He had sent his suggestions to Wagner for criticism; the gist of Wagner's reply is that the object of the proposed institute, the furthering of art, will not be served by offering prizes; these only benefit individual artists by enabling

them to dispose of their works, and the institute would be nothing more than an art-lottery. An artist who feels no inward necessity for artistic creation, who needs the stimulus of a reward, will never bring forth a real work of art. Artistic creation must come from within the artist himself. There is no use in patching up a moribund existence; where the inner vital impulse is wanting no healthy life will result from mere external stimulus. When the article was written Wagner was full of the views about the drama expounded in his theoretical writings, and he takes exception to Liszt's confining his institution to the four *single* arts. These already have the means which they require at their disposal; the art which needs protection is that which embraces them all, the drama, and the activity of a Goethe Institute would show itself most worthily in building a theatre which should be free from all the corrupt traditions of all existing institutions.

Ein Theater in Zürich is a reforming essay. Under present conditions, Wagner says, Paris sets the fashion for every theatre in Europe. In a small town like Zurich, where means are limited, the works of the grand opera have to be stripped of their showy externals, the only real attraction which they possess. Nothing remains but the bare dress, and the so-called "art" resolves itself into a new form of dulness to relieve that of daily life. The natural predisposition of mankind for theatrical acting is proved by many familiar phenomena. Instead of a special class of professional actors he would have acting guilds formed from members of the general community, non-professionals, the more talented of whom would be selected to take part in the public performances. This would be rendered posssible by a system of universal dramatic education by qualified instructors, and would be quite as feasible as the musical education provided by the singing associations existing in every town in Germany. By this means the commercial element, so degrading to art, would be removed, and the evil fame attaching to the theatrical profession would disappear.

In the early part of 1851 appeared an article on *Lohengrin* from the pen of Liszt in the Leipzig *Illustrirte Zeitung*. Soon afterwards it was published along with the previous *Tannhäuser* article in pamphlet form by Brockhaus of Leipzig. Both the articles are to the present day valuable contributions to the criticism of those operas.

Next to Liszt the friend whom Wagner most valued and who was most in sympathy with his intellectual tendency was the young violinist Theodor Uhlig. He had already by his

ability acquired a position both as a musician and as a writer. He wrote in Brendel's *Neue Zeitschrift* and in the *Deutsche Monatschrift*, a Stuttgart paper whose editor Kolatschek, lived in Zurich and used all his influence for Wagner. In July, 1851, Uhlig took advantage of the summer vacation to pay Wagner a visit in Zurich, and they made an excursion together into the interior of the country.

CHAPTER XVI

THE THEORETICAL WRITINGS OF THE ZURICH PERIOD

> The universal Burning-up, as in hell-fire, of Human Shams. The oath of Twenty-five Million men, which has since become that of all men whatsoever. Rather than live longer under lies we will die! . . . Millennium of Anarchies;—abridge it, spend your heart's-blood upon abridging it, Ye Heroic Wise that are to come! —*Carlyle.*

WAGNER'S theoretical writings have received far too little attention in England. They are very difficult to read in the original, and quite untranslatable. In our insular indifference to foreign, especially German thought, in our habit of blinding ourselves to all that is not plainly and at once visible within our limited horizon, we blandly dismiss it as trivial, and persuade ourselves that such a man as Wagner could "embitter days and nights with long meditation on questions that any clear-headed schoolboy could quickly have settled for him." We have heard similar criticism of Kant and of Plato. Journalists who speak such language have not read Wagner's works. A knowledge of Wagner's writings is indispensable before we can judge of his art. How are we, for example, by the light of Nature alone, or from the canons of current æsthetics, to understand the curse laid by Alberich on the gold? or why Wotan must necessarily perish? why Lohengrin must return to the Grail? How can we recognise in Tristan not a vulgar adulterer but a knight of the highest honour? Wagner's dramas are not like modern problem plays, intended to afford an evening's recreation or a light stimulus to popular reflection. The theatre as a school of instruction in the deepest truths needs concentration, not diversion of the mind. It

is not necessary to subscribe to all that he wrote, but we must know his standpoint. The interest of his writings lies in their earnest conviction, in his unflinching determination not to rest satisfied with pleasing half-truths; they involve social problems which have occupied the minds of thinking men from the days of Assyrian tablets to the Peace Congresses of our own time.

Let us turn to an idea which is prominent in all his works, from the *Holländer* to *Parsifal*, the idea of "Redemption" (Erlösung). Two salient convictions stand forth before all others in all his works; on the one hand, profound pessimism with respect to the social foundations of modern industrial civilisation, built on selfishness and greed; on the other, fervid, unshakable faith in the goodness of human nature. The utter corruption of society and the infinite capacity of human beings for regeneration are the centres round which his theories and his art revolve, and are fundamentally at one with the Christian principle of Redemption. He prefaces the essays with the burning words of Carlyle on the French Revolution which head this chapter. His aim is not the invention of some new technical formula, some novel device of combining the arts which shall at once convert the "opera" into the "musical drama." He will not admit the term "musical drama" or any other term to denote his work, because any such term would only relate to its superficial form while ignoring its special character. To borrow a simile applied by Moritz Hauptmann to his own theoretical work, Wagner's principles are to practical composition what chemistry is to cooking. He had as deep a scorn for formulas as had Carlyle; he attacks evil at its roots in human nature and human society. "Zersponnen muss ich in Spähne ihn sehen," says Siegfried to the bungling smith Mime. He will have no hand in patching a rotten edifice; not the drama alone, all modern civilisation must be shattered to its foundations to make room for a better order. His writings are therefore mainly social, but there are not wanting technical hints of great interest to the dramatist and the composer, especially in his principal treatise, *Oper und Drama*.

I will only mention his use of alliteration, not the least happy of his inventions, for his way of using alliteration is his own invention, and is quite different from that of old Germanic poetry.

Die Kunst und die Revolution.[1]

This essay is a glowing appreciation of Greek art and civilisation as contrasted with our own. Wagner commences with a reference to the recent revolution which has ruined so many industries and left so many destitute, and asks whether it has injured art.

All modern art leads back to Greek art, which grew out of the ideal of the "beautiful, strong and free man," become divine in Apollo. The Greek drama was Apollo embodied as real, living art; it was the Greek people itself. With the fall of the Athenian state Greek tragedy came to an end. He reviews the gradual decay of the ideal Apollo under the influence, first of the Roman Empire, afterwards of Christianity. The distinctive vice of Christian peoples is hypocrisy; the poetry of medieval peoples was "the sincere hypocrisy of fanaticism, the whimsicality of heroism"; it offered conventions in the place of Nature. And so "free" art passed into the service of the great lords, and it would be hard to say which was the greatest hypocrite, Louis XIV. listening to plays on hatred of tyrants, or Corneille or Racine writing them on freedom and political virtue. "Such is the art which fills the whole civilised world! Its essence is Industry, its moral purpose the earning of money, its æsthetic end the entertainment of the bored." Its proper home is the play-house and the opera:

> Here the prince, after a fatiguing dinner-party, the banker after an anxious speculation, the workman tired after his day's labour, assemble in the theatre to rest, to divert themselves, to be amused; for an effort they are not prepared. . . . What have we from Shakespeare's disclosure of the endless wealth of true human nature? from the manly, independent poetry imparted to music by Beethoven? Ask the miserable caricatures of your theatres, the doggerel commonplaces of your operas; they will tell you!

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iii. 8.

Every element of modern art is the direct opposite of that of the Greeks. With them the performance of a tragedy was an act of religious worship; the gods themselves shed blessings from their stage; with us the police intervene to banish all religion from the theatre. While the antique drama was in harmony with civic life, and therefore conservative (as with Æschylus), with us it is revolutionary. In the antique all the arts were united in friendly co-operation; to-day each lives for itself in selfish isolation. In Greece the drama was the possession of all; with us it is the luxury of the wealthy; and so forth. Wagner's fiery eloquence almost persuades us into believing that Greek institutions really were such as he imagines them. "Rather half a day Greek than for eternity a non-Grecian god!"

Revolution, not restoration, is needed for us to throw off the accumulated burden of modern civilisation. We do not wish to become Greeks, but to regain our strength from all-healing Nature; love alone can bring forth the beautiful. Here we meet with another favourite thought of Wagner: only the strong know love; the love of the weak is nothing but the pruriency of lust. The essay closes with rules for the organisation of a theatre free from the taint of industrialism, a theatre destined to be the means of accomplishing the revolution. So shall the Christian Jesus join hands with the Greek Apollo.

Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft.[1]

"Man," says Wagner, "will never be all that he can and ought to be until his life is the faithful reflection of Nature, until he consciously follows the only real necessity, that within himself, and ceases to be subject to an arbitrary power imposed from without. . . . As man is not free until he becomes joyfully conscious of his bond with Nature, so art is not free until it no longer has reason to be ashamed of its bond with life." Invention originates with the people, not with the

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iii. 42.

intellectuals; language, religion, orderly government, are all natural growths from the soil of the people; they are not imposed from above. Annihilate the conditions under which the sway of fashion is possible, and you have the soil on which art may flourish. Human life at the present time is entirely controlled by abstraction and by fashion.

The art-work of the future can only be brought forth by the united effort of the whole community, not by any individual. The art of the Greeks, essentially religious, was limited to the Hellenic peoples; we have to expand this pan-Hellenic art into a pan-human art, with the aid of universal religion, "for art is the living representation of religion." Man is two-fold: "The external man communicates himself to the eye, the internal man directly to the ear, by the tones of his voice":

> Speech is the condensation of the element of voice, and the word is the crystallised mass[1] of tone. In speech feeling conveys itself by the ear to feeling, but to that likewise to be condensed and crystallised feeling to which it seeks to bring itself in sure and unmistakable understanding. It is thus the organ of that special feeling which reasons with itself and yearns for others' understanding—the Intellect. For the more vague and general feeling the immediate attributes of tone sufficed. This general feeling therefore abode by Tone, as its adequate and materially contenting utterance; in the *quantitative* value of its compass it found the means of, so to say, accenting its own peculiar *qualities* in their universal bearings. But the *definite* need which seeks by speech to gain an understanding is more decided and more pressing; it abides not in contentment with its physical expression, for it has to differentiate its own subjective feeling from a general feeling.[2]

Wagner's language, involved in the original, does not gain lucidity in a literal translation, but we may detect the germ of an idea that the spoken word contains the logical, describing,

[1] The German is "Masse" (mass), not "Mass" (measure) as Mr. Ellis translates.

[2] *Ges. Schr.*, iii. 64–65. Having myself utterly failed to render Wagner's language in this passage in intelligible English I have adopted the translation of Mr. Ashton Ellis.

particular and objective element, the tone the more *general* element of verbal communication.

He now passes to the three "purely human" arts, dancing, music and poetry:

> Three sisters, born of yore, celebrating their orgies wherever the conditions for art arise. They are inseparable so long as art remains whole and indissoluble; for the orgies are its essence; so united they are and interwoven that each when isolated loses life and movement, and their existence is then only spurious and artificial.[1]

That is to say, each art individually is stronger in organic union with other arts than it can be alone. It is important to note this, because the idea has gained ground that Wagner's union of the arts involves a curtailment of the power of each. It involves, indeed, a *sacrifice* on the part of each single art, but only for the sake of gaining incomparably greater power, as a man and woman when united in marriage gain in value individually.

It will scarcely be necessary to follow him through the details of the past history of each art. Only it must be explained that by dancing he does not mean movement of the legs and feet alone, but all rhythmic movement of the body—gesture, which in children and animals is nearly always rhythmic. It is the most real of all the arts, occupying the whole being, not any part thereof. Music is the connecting link between dancing and poetry; it is the heart of man, the blood which imparts colour to the outlying features, and supplies internal nourishment to the nerves of the brain. Wagner traces in history how in Greece the three arts were united; the poet, while sailing on the boundless sea of music, never lost sight of the solid land of the spoken word, until Christianity, with its eyes ever turned to Heaven, lost sight of the earth, while music

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iii. 67. It seems still necessary to point out that the fact of the co-ordinate origin of dancing, music, and poetry is a perfectly well-established fact; see, for example, H. Spencer *First Principles*, § 125; Bücher *Arbeit und Rhythmus*, etc. They are found united in all primitive drama, not in that of Greece alone, but in the drama of medieval Europe, of India, China and Japan. Only in modern times have they been divorced.

sailed its own course through the endless depths of counterpoint and harmony to end with Beethoven. For with Beethoven the last symphony has been written; beyond this there may be advance in technical methods, but poetic inspiration can go no farther.

Poetry, he continues, is only produced by the people, or, at least, in the sense of the people. With time there arises a learned, critical class, distinct from the people, and poetry gradually separates itself from its associated arts; it is no longer sung or danced, but read, and thus develops along new lines independently, as description:

> The really healthy man in the fulness of his bodily stature does not describe what he wills and loves; he merely wills and loves, and conveys to us through his artistic organs his delight therein—most fully and directly by means of dramatic representation.[1]

When no longer able to feel we like to talk about feeling.

Shakespeare, by virtue of his unrivalled genius, achieved the drama with words alone, aided only by the imagination of his audience. He is, indeed, the mightiest poet of all times, but he is only the Thespis of the tragedy of the future. The two solitary Titans, Beethoven and Shakespeare, will there join hands. In the end the drama became a literary product for silent perusal, poetry a vehicle of abstract thought. Severed from life, it was barren; all its forms came under the control of fashion:

> He who does not proceed from inner necessity can choose as he pleases. Our German dramatists were not satisfied with the adoption of the French form; this or that ingredient was still required for the brew—a little Shakespearean daring, a little Spanish pathos, a spice of Schiller's ideality, or of Iffland's bourgeois smugness.

In treating of the single arts in their relation to the universal art of the future, Wagner contemplates them with the eye of

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iii. 106.

a poet, as living and conscious beings, endowed with human emotions. The union is one of love, of self-resignation to the common well-being; it is organic and equal, like that of man and wife. In the opera and the oratorio it was not equal; music treated the poetry as its slave. They are purely musical compositions, the words serving only as the vehicle for the music. Each of the arts is discussed in turn—architecture, sculpture, painting, all have their share in the art-work of the future. The main point is that they shall cease to cater for the luxuries of the rich, but shall become the common property of all, and that for this end they shall join hands and co-operate together instead of working in isolation. There seems no reason why the "art of the future" need necessarily be confined to the drama, although that is its summit and crown, but on this point Wagner is not very explicit; there is a good deal of vagueness in his writing on subjects not primarily connected with dramatic art.

Oper und Drama.[1]

Wagner announces his thesis in these words:

> The error of the opera as a form of art lay in the fact that a means of expression (music) was made an end, while the end (the drama) was made a means.

He continues:

> Not from the popular plays of the Middle Ages, in which some traces of natural community between music and dramatic art may still be found, did the opera emerge, but from the luxurious Courts of Italy. . . . Here certain people of quality who had no taste for Palestrina's music conceived the idea of getting singers to entertain them with *Arias*, that is Folk-songs stripped of their truth and *naïveté*, to which were adapted arbitrary words strung together at random in a semblance of dramatic connection. This *Dramatic Cantata*, aiming as it did at everything and anything except the drama, is the mother of our opera; it is the opera itself. As the germ developed it expanded into the purely musical form of the *Aria*, and became simply a medium for the dexterity of

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iii. 231; continued iv. 1.

the throats of singers. The task of the poet was to contrive a form of poetry which should merely serve to supply verses for the musical *Arias* of the singers. Metastasio's great merit consisted in his never putting the musician into a difficulty, never making any unaccustomed demand upon him from mere dramatic considerations.

The object of the treatise, says Wagner, is to show that with the aid of our modern music the drama may attain a meaning undreamed of hitherto. He follows the further development of the opera through Gluck to Cherubini, Méhul and Spontini, with whom, he declares, the last word has been said on the opera as a purely musical form. The most important figure in all this period is Mozart, "the most richly gifted of all musicians." He, absolute musician as he was, would long ago have solved the problem of the opera, had he ever met with the poet whom he, the musician, only needed to help. Mozart always composed music, but beautiful music only when he was inspired; hence the great superiority of the music in *Don Giovanni* and *Figaro* over that of *Titus* and *Cosi fan Tutte*. But Mozart altered nothing in principle; the mighty wings of his genius left the formal framework of the opera untouched; he poured the fiery stream of his music into the operatic forms, but they were too weak to hold it. We know from a letter to his father what his views were: "In the opera the poetry must be the obedient daughter of the music."[1]

The root of the operatic Aria was in the *Volkslied*, in which words and music were inseparable. The luxurious idlers of the Italian Courts took possession of this wild flower; they scented its fragrance and tried to distil it off, to have it in bottles for use at their convenience. To descend into the fields and view the flower in its own home never occurred to these dwellers in palaces, till at last there came the great magician who could make artificial flowers of silk and velvet, and endow them with scent almost like real flowers. His name was Giacomo Rossini.

Rossini wanted to live, and knew very well that he must live with those who had ears to hear him. He discovered that the

[1] October 13th, 1781, quoted by Jahn, i. 664.

> only thing which had life in the opera was absolute melody. . . . He turned away from the pedantry of scores and hearkened to those who sang without written music; what he heard was just that which he remembered from the whole apparatus of the opera —naked, ear-pleasing, absolute-melodic melody; melody which never is nor can be anything but melody; which glides into our ears, we know not why; which we sing again, we know not why; which to-day we give up for that of yesterday, and have forgotten to-morrow—again we know not why; which is sad when we are gay, joyous when we are sad; which we hum to ourselves—still we know not why.

Wagner is, of course, not inveighing against melody as such; no one knew better than he that melody is the essence of all music. He is only speaking of the frivolous, irresponsible melody of the Italian opera.

Very different was the method of Karl Maria von Weber. He too had breathed the fragrance of the *Volkslied;* he went to where the flower grew and plucked it; but therewith it died.

> It is characteristic of German folk-melody that it avoids short mobile rhythms and affects long-breathed, flowing, joyous yet languishing periods. A German song entirely without harmony is unimaginable; we always hear it in at least two parts. It seems itself to invite us to add the bass and the easily adapted middle voice. This melody is the foundation of Weber's folk-opera.

But Weber did not disturb the relations between words and music. The only difference between him and Rossini is in the grace and nobility of his melody contrasted with the frivolity of the Italian.

The edifice was crowned by Meyerbeer. In his historical operas every conceivable style is brought together. He broke down every barrier; he threw open the flood-gates, and in the deluge of his music he drowned the opera with all that it contained. He made it his task to create out of nothing, and his method of procedure was to appear strange; to say No! when he meant Yes! to appear joyful where he had to express sorrow, and thus with a public which is always attracted

by eccentricity to become fashionable. The object for which he strove was *effect*, or as we may put it, "effect without a cause."

Beethoven after one trial never returned to the opera. He endeavoured to express particular feelings through the medium of pure, that is to say, instrumental music alone.

> Beethoven (in his later works) leaves upon us the impression of a man who has something to communicate, but cannot express it clearly, while his successors [he has Mendelssohn in his mind] seem like men who tell us, often with charming prolixity, that they have nothing to say.

Wagner concludes his discourse on the opera with an illustration taken from Meyerbeer's *Prophète*, the celebrated sunrise in the third act. The story is of a hero burning with patriotism, who leads an army against the stronghold of a tyrant, determined to conquer or die. Arrived before the city, he seizes the standard and waves it before the walls, crying: "Up! Death or Victory! The city must be ours!" At this moment the sun begins to rise, as if the very heavens were joining in the enthusiasm of the host, as with one irresistible charge it rushes to victory;—so it might have been. But Meyerbeer cares nothing for all this; with him the sunrise is no miracle, but simply a triumph of mechanical ingenuity—an "effect without a cause."

Wagner recognised in Meyerbeer an embodiment of all that to him was most hateful in art. Towards Rossini he had no feeling of ill-will; Rossini wrote as he felt, and Wagner was far too receptive a musician not to feel the charm of his siren-melodies. We have a delightful account of a conversation between the two masters when, years afterwards, they met in Paris, and frankly discussed their artistic ideals, by a friend who was present.[1] But Meyerbeer was different; he was without artistic conscience, a man who, possessing great gifts, had shamelessly prostituted them to the service of luxury and fashion. To his natural endowments as a musician Wagner does full justice:

[1] See further on, Chapter XIX.

> There are passages in his operas where he incontestably rises to the highest artistic power of expression. These moments of real inspiration always arise from a poetical situation . . . for example, certain parts of the famous love-scene in Act IV. of *Les Huguenots*, especially the wonderfully impressive melody in G♭, sprung like a fragrant flower from a situation which penetrates every fibre of the human heart, comparable to very few, and those the most consummate among the productions of musical genius.

Wagner has been severely censured for his "attack" on Meyerbeer, and he himself tells us that he felt some hesitation in publishing his criticism. His scruples were needless. The fact that he had once been under an obligation to Meyerbeer did not oblige him to become his slave, and a frank statement of his position was more honourable than secret rancour. There is no personal attack upon his character of the kind which Wagner himself had often to suffer. But Meyerbeer the operatic composer then held undisputed sway in the operatic world, and had to be demolished, for he was using his power to corrupt the public taste, and for Wagner, with his fervid conviction of the high purpose of art, to have kept silence would have been an act of cowardice. Meyerbeer took little notice of it; indeed, the whole of the acrimonious controversy, which has scarcely yet subsided, was not between the principals but between their fanatical followers on either side.

The second part of the work deals with the drama and the nature of dramatic art. Lessing in his celebrated essay on the limits of poetry and painting had only literary poetry in view, not the drama. With Wagner "drama" always means, not a play printed in a book, but its representation on the stage. An essential distinction has to be observed between on the one hand arts which *depict* (painting) or *describe* (romance in prose or verse) and on the other the art which *represents* (the drama). On the stage the events are not told of as having happened or depicted as existing, but are actually enacted before our eyes; hence the impression made by the drama is far more direct than that of any other art; in it the romance, as it were, springs into life.

The drama, apart from the text, gives actions pure and simple, but not the inner motives of the actors; herein lies the essential distinction between drama and romance. The drama is limited as to time, and therefore needs condensation; it must as far as possible be stripped of all adventitious reflective matter. With the romance the opposite is the case; the poet is not confined within any restrictions of space or time, and can expatiate as he pleases on the impelling motives; the very form of the romance invites reflection and exposition. We may here recall the old problem of history and myth as materials for the drama. An historical act is the product of many complex motives, so infinitely ramified and interwoven that the trained diplomatist or historian can barely master them. How could such an act be made intelligible within the limits of a drama! Only arbitrary actions proceeding directly out of the will of the actor, unhampered by any reflective considerations, can find a place on the stage, and these are found in the myth. Why Catharine de Medici devised the Bartholomew massacre would need a long book to explain; why Sigurd rode the fire is evident at once from his character. Pre-eminently is this true of the musical drama, which in a far greater degree than the spoken drama needs condensation—concentration upon the psychic motives which lend themselves most naturally to musical expression, and thus enable the musical stream to continue unbroken through each scene. Of course, like every other theory, this must not be pressed unduly; we must not draw rigid lines of demarcation and say that only mythical subjects may be employed for the musical drama, only history for prose romance; where the conditions exist any subject will be suitable. But we may say with truth that myth is the essence of a musical work, and a subject is suitable for musical treatment just in proportion as the mythical element prevails.

The earlier poets, Shakespeare and his successors, chose their subjects from the literature of romance and history. Difficulties came to light in the course of time with the development of technical methods, and especially through the growing

demand for more realistic scenery. The play gradually became a literary product, and poets began to write plays not for representation but for silent perusal.

Wagner treats this theme at great length, discussing the relative place of history and myth from the æsthetician's point of view and by light of the practice of the greater poets. He illustrates it by a very striking analysis of the Œdipus tragedies of Sophocles, showing how the myth was handled by the greatest of Athenian poets. After quoting the dictum of Napoleon that the place of the ancient Fate is occupied in modern times by Politics, Wagner continues:

> Our Fate is the arbitrary political state, an external necessity required for the maintenance of society. . . . The life-impulse of the individual is always new and direct; the essence of society is custom, its outlook indirect, mediate. Society, not fully comprehending the nature of the individual, exerts a limiting, restraining influence, becoming more tyrannous in proportion as the animating and innovating impulses of the individual are instinctively opposed to custom.

Thus the individual brings destruction upon himself, which is conceived by the Greeks as a curse laid upon him by the gods in expiation of some crime committed unwittingly, and as descending from generation to generation until the whole race has perished:

> In reality the curse is but a figurative interpretation of the instinctive, unconscious action of the individual, proceeding of natural necessity in opposition to the arbitrary, conscious ruling of society, and it is this latter which calls for explanation and apology.[1]

In all this Wagner is far in advance of present-day thought. Our political leaders persistently repeat the catchwords "democracy," "liberty," without perceiving what is manifest to anyone who has read history to good purpose, that the two are mutually destructive. The more society acquires order and stability in democracy the more is the liberty of the

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iv. 54.

individual curtailed. The savage is free; civilised man is bound by adamantine chains.

In the last of the three tragedies which form the Œdipus cycle the political state is represented by Creon, the free human being who acts from inner impulse by Antigone. Creon issues an edict, necessary for the safety of the State; Antigone, instinctively following the most natural and purest of human impulses, love for her brother and religious reverence for the gods, disobeys it and perishes. The whole story of the overpowering tragedy, the whole of every tragedy, is told in her speech before Creon.[1]

Similarly with Ajax and Philoctetes:

> heroes whom no consideration of prudence or public opinion could divert from the self-annihilating truth and necessity of their nature to swim in the shallow waters of politics, which the weather-wise Odysseus could navigate with such masterly skill.

The political State lives on the vices of society; its virtues proceed exclusively from individuals. In individuals alone do we find those healthy, purely human impulses, the free individuality, which alone provide the material for art. The art-work of the future can only flourish by the annihilation of the State, and the substitution for it of a single, universal religion. The trend of his thought is precisely that of Plato, who sought in Kallipolis to abolish the policeman and replace him by education in righteousness.

The condensation of motives which has been effected by the elimination of all subsidiary and personal elements involves their intensification. The tragic act is of the nature of a miracle, by which Wagner means something unusual and of far-reaching import. Such actions cannot be achieved by a man whose feelings are distracted by feeble, unnecessary, unsympathetic external considerations; he must be at one with himself to bring forth a definite, necessary expression of his own being. Such a hero will require a medium of utterance more powerful than that of prose, and will find it in music:

[1] *Antig.*, vv. 450–462.

> Music is both the beginning and the end of language, as feeling is the beginning and the end of understanding, myth the beginning and the end of history, lyric the beginning and the end of poetry.

The original germ of language must be sought in rhythmic musical sounds. Divest words of their consonants, retaining only the vowels, and we have the purely emotional tones of the animals; they were from the first supported by rhythmic gesture. So far the expression was purely subjective, but with time the need arose of denoting external objects, and the vowel was, as it were, clothed with a consonant; thus the etymological roots of language came into being. The rhythmic succession of words would naturally be accentuated by cognate syllables, and thus arose rhyme, alliteration, and assonance. Language when it cast off rhythm severed itself from Nature and from music. It degenerated into prose, the language of convention and of modern life.

The third part of *Oper und Drama* is headed "Poetry and Music in the Drama of the Future."

Two ways of intensifying the emotional expression are available—metre and melody. Modern poetry has cast off the vigorous, elastic, expressive metres of our own early language[1] for a borrowed form; it has adopted a stereotyped pattern of mainly iambic verse, originating ultimately with the Greeks. The metres of the Greek ode were conditioned by the steps of the accompanying choric dance, but owing to the severance of the poetry from the dance this connection has been lost, and there only remains the emasculated body of the metre, without its natural organic life. Again, the Greek metres rest upon quantity, intervals of time, ours upon accent; or rather the fact that such an elementary question as that whether modern verse is quantitative or accentual is still a matter of dispute shows the utter chaos of modern metre. This requires some comment. English readers familiar with the lofty verse

[1] I may instance the so-called "swell-verse" of ancient alliterative English poems such as *The Wanderer*, where the metre varies with the emotional mood of the poem, producing an effect when read aloud like the swelling of an organ.

of Milton, or the highly polished metres of later poets, will find it hard to believe that modern verse is as shadowy as Wagner represents it. All that these poets really show is the power of genius to breathe life into a decrepit body. Anyone who is able to appreciate the resounding lyrics of Pindar or of Aristophanes when recited aloud, even without the adjunct of the dance, will realise the difference between the modern *rhythmic* verse and, if I may coin a word, the *rhythmitectonic* lyric odes of the ancients. One is like contemplating the columns and capitals of a cathedral, the other the edifice itself in its structural harmony. The artificiality of our own rhythms and the consequent clashing of the rhetorical accent with that of the metre becomes very apparent when the poetry is set to music. Wagner tells of an actress who was in the habit of writing her parts out in prose that her declamation might not be distorted by the sight of the metrical verses. This is just what music does; it sacrifices the verse and follows its own accents:

> Had a poet ever felt any real desire to raise the expressive power of his language to the convincing fulness of melody, his first endeavour would have been so to adjust the rhetorical accent of the words as to determine the sound, healthy rhythm necessary for the verses as well as for the declamation.

Instead of that, we find the words of a master-poet like Goethe described as "too beautiful" for music, while trivial inanities are superscribed "Lines for Music!" *Ce qui est trop sot pour être dit, on le chante.*

Wagner discusses in great detail the elementary principles which must be observed in the union of verse with music. Whereas rhyme is a purely artificial adjunct, enforcing the metrical scheme, alliteration confers logical strength by emphasising kinship of root-syllables, and is able to unite the most distant concepts. In the music the addition of words leads to a considerable extension of the scope of modulation. All this is treated rather fully. I can only single out a few points which seem worthy of notice. The opposition between

the emotional and the logical elements is throughout kept constantly in view, the two coalescing in the concrete expression of the drama. Choruses are excluded, since no characters can be admitted of such subordinate importance that they could join in polyphony:

> Poet and musician resemble two travellers starting from the same point to journey in opposite directions. On the other side of the world they meet again, each having traversed one half of the globe. They exchange experiences, each relating to the other what he has seen and found. The poet speaks of plains and mountains, valleys, meadows, men and animals which he has met in his travels through the land. The musician has traversed the seas; he tells of their marvels, of the awe inspired by their wonderful monsters, of the danger of being wrecked. Each longs irresistibly to see what the other has seen, to realise what till now he knows only by description, and they part to complete their round of the world. Once more they meet, this time to part no more; the poet has traversed the seas, the musician the land; they both now know the world. . . . The poet has become musician, the musician poet, and together they make up the perfect artistic man.[1]

The orchestra follows minutely the action on the stage through its subtlest moods, vivifying, enforcing and completing what the words have left unsaid. It must not engross the attention of the hearer, "that is to say, not in its mechanical, but only in its organic function." He means that the attention of the hearer will be concentrated on the words, the orchestra determining sub-consciously the emotional mood of each particular situation. The vocal melody must present a distinct individuality, separate from the orchestra, and must never be allowed to coalesce with it. A well-known rule of composition lays it down that every harmony must be complete in the orchestra; it must not be left to the voice to fill in any essential interval. Nor is it permissible for the orchestra to play the melody in unison with the voice. The vocal melody forms the connecting-link between the music and the verse. It is like a boat fashioned to navigate a particular lake; it is useless

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iv. 159.

on land, but springs into activity when laid into the right position upon its own element, and controlled by its own rudder and oars. Since it has grown organically out of the sound and the sense of the words it can have no life apart from those words; detached from them the melody has no meaning, and the words again have no meaning apart from their dramatic context; hence has arisen the strange notion that Wagner's music is unmelodious and his words unpoetical.

Each of the factors has its own part to play in carrying out the dramatic intention, and will not be allowed to encroach upon or to dominate any of the others. The controlling master of the whole is the drama itself, to which all the parts, music, words, gesture, costumes, scenery, etc., are subordinate, and equal among themselves.

A peculiar function of the orchestra lies in its faculty of calling up an anticipatory vision (Ahnung) of things before they appear in bodily form. Wagner likens it to a harp roused into musical sound by a passing current of air, awaiting the skilful hand of the player who will give it form and definite meaning. Similarly it can recall that which has passed away, as reminiscence (Erinnerung).

One metaphor runs like a thread through his analysis of the relation of poetry to music. He regularly conceives them as man and wife, language as the begetting, form-giving element, music as the receptive, conceiving, bringing forth. Only an *organic* union can bring the drama into life; otherwise we have mere fragments mechanically forced into contact.

Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde.[1]

This essay was originally written as an introduction to an edition of the text of three of his operatic poems, but was eventually published separately. It may be described as a psychological autobiography. It will, however, be most conveniently considered among his Zurich theoretical works, because it belongs to that period of reflection and contains

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iv. 230.

some of his thoughts regarding the art-work of the future. We must, he says, give up one notion with which the critics of that day were much occupied, namely that of *monumental* art, that is to say an art which shall be valid for all time and under all conditions. Art is essentially new-creative; it is inspired by the living world around us, and changes with the conditions of its environment. Transfer a work of art away from its native home and it becomes a different thing; it then appeals only to the understanding, not to the senses and feelings. He instances Don Juan, a figure conceived by the licentious times of the French Revolution; must not the impression which it makes when translated into the German language and represented before an audience of sober latter-day citizens be different from what it was then?

The rest of the treatise is mainly personal. He defends himself against the charge of being a genius, which, he says, is a shallow and meaningless epithet; genius is often given to the wrong people. At his birth the Norn bestowed upon him the gift of "the never-resting soul that ever seeks the new." He continues to trace the gradual development of his artistic character by the light of his works, each presenting itself in a new aspect before his mind, and bringing out a new feature of his consciousness. The ideal always present to his mind was "the purely human, freed from all conventionality":

> The only impulse which guided me throughout was to communicate to others with all possible clearness and intelligibility that which I saw myself, and it was always the subject-matter which determined the form. My highest aim was clearness in the execution; not the superficial clearness of a frivolous subject, but the rich, varied lucidity with which a pregnant, comprehensive subject becomes intelligible.[1]

Wagner's very earnestness in these essays almost defeats its own purpose. The public whom he was addressing had no idea of going to the opera to collect its thoughts; it did not reflect upon conventionality and the purely human, nor was it

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, iv. 300.

accustomed to see in modern institutions and ways of thinking a sinister power specially contrived to crush all the higher aspirations of the individual. His writings fell upon deaf ears; they were read with curiosity, perhaps with a certain measure of academical assent, and were admired as "literature," though little understood. But they remain for us, and may well be pondered over even by those who least share his views. Mr. Dannreuther has truly said that wherever Wagner was brought to a stand a social problem lies buried. Unhappily, his writings have been rendered more difficult than they need be by a bewildering terminology, partly his own, partly adopted from Feuerbach. He is struggling to find words for things which words will not express. Every resolute thinker is in the same case; for behind the sensible, technical externals for which words are available there lies something unspeakable. It is this that scientific rationalism consistently ignores, although it is in reality the essential thing in every phenomenon—that which differentiates a melody from a succession of tones, a beautiful face from mere regularity of feature. Having neither parts nor attributes it can have no name; directly we attach a name it is discredited. So Wagner uses such misleading terms as "das Reinmenschliche," "sittlicher Kern," "sinnlich-sinnig," "bewusst," etc., and arrives at such questionable notions as the "Destruction of the State." He is struggling with refractory words; the reader naturally takes the words in their literal sense and cannot understand them. Where language fails art steps in, and so we find Wagner is much more intelligible in his dramatic creations than in his writings. His seeming extravagance, however, is only on the surface; all he says is logically reasoned from the premises. Those who wave aside his ideals because they are not immediately realisable under actual conditions might study Kant with advantage. An ideal is not necessarily to be rejected because it is not at once realisable. He is not hankering after a millennium, but trying to open men's minds to the practicable possibilities of art. There is nothing unrealisable for us of modern times in his idea of uniting the single arts in the one

universal art of the drama. He was himself an experienced conductor and dramatist, and no man knew better the possibilities and the limitations of the stage. His proposals —those of his maturer writings—are in the main sober and practical, if only the will among actors, managers and public were forthcoming. Vain, abstract thought was foreign to Wagner's habit of mind ; everywhere it is the sensible (sinnlich) presentation of a work of art that is before his mind ; theory is subsidiary thereto. That his glorious idea was no mere phantom is sufficiently proved by his own creations, but he would not himself have admitted them as its consummation, for he regarded himself only as a beginner, as having laid the foundation, for the rest to be achieved by the united effort of all concerned. For art to become a reality, a national possession, the soil must be prepared ; men must set themselves other ideals than those which they had followed hitherto. Art must no longer be a fashionable diversion, but must become a serious occupation, worthy of a cultured people. He held with Ruskin that " Art properly so called is no recreation ; it cannot be learned at spare moments, nor pursued when we have nothing better to do. It is no handiwork for drawing-room tables ; no relief of the ennui of boudoirs ; it must be understood and undertaken seriously or not at all. To advance it men's lives must be given, and to receive it their hearts."

CHAPTER XVII

COMMENCEMENT OF THE "RING"

WAGNER had, as we remember, before leaving Dresden occupied himself with a closer study of the Scandinavian myths preserved to us in the Eddic lays and the *Völsunga Saga*. In 1848 he had made a sketch for a grand tragedy on the story of Sigurd and Brynhild, which is now included in his collected works as *Der Nibelungen-Mythus*.[1] Of the last portion, containing the events which lead up to the death of Sigurd, he wrote the complete text of a tragedy, entitling it *Siegfried's Tod*.[2] In May, 1851, after he had written *Oper und Drama*, he received from Weimar an offer of 500 thalers (£75) for the opera to be ready by July 1st of the following year. He accepted it, but on commencing the composition of the music it came home to him that too much of the previous history of the hero and heroine had been assumed as known or had been left to be narrated; that it must be preceded by another drama representing Sigurd's (Siegfried's) early history. He wrote the text in June, 1851, and called it *Der junge Siegfried*, bringing it into connection with Grimm's story of the boy who went forth to learn fear. This again, he saw, could only be a fragment; Brynhild, too, called for a previous history. By the autumn he had conceived the idea of treating the whole of the story of Siegfried and Brünnhilde with the fall of the Aesir, as in the sketch of 1848, in a gigantic trilogy, to be represented on three successive evenings and one preliminary evening. It was intended that the first performance should be at a great festival in some quiet place far from the civilisation of towns, the four dramas being given in succession, after which

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, ii. 156. [2] *Ib.*, ii. 167.

each might be given separately if desirable. In a long letter to Liszt on November 20th he explains his intentions in detail, sending him at the same time the text of his *Junger Siegfried*. The arrangement with Weimar was, of course, cancelled by the new project, and Wagner returned the 200 thalers which had been advanced. Liszt was delighted with his proposal, and wrote him an enthusiastic letter of encouragement. He wrote to Dresden for Hagen's translation of the Völsunga Saga; Uhlig had to borrow it from the Royal Library, but when it came Wagner no longer required it. *Götterdämmerung* (*Siegfried's Tod*) and *Siegfried* (*der junge Siegfried*) were already written; *Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* are less concerned with the saga. Wagner when creating paid little heed to the actual text of his sources; he took the material which they suggested and fashioned it according to his own fancy, singling out here and there a phrase or an incident which he could turn to account.

Uhlig had for some time been busy making the piano arrangement of *Lohengrin*. Röckel was in confinement in Waldheim, his death sentence having been commuted into imprisonment for life; but he was permitted to correspond with his friends, and Wagner wrote him long and very interesting letters about his own schemes. In September he went to a hydropathic establishment called Albisbrunn, not far from Zurich, to undergo treatment for dyspepsia, a complaint from which he suffered acutely all his life.

Zurich had since the disturbances become a notable intellectual centre. The political refugees often belonged to the more thoughtful and cultured classes, scholars, artists, literary men, etc., and after the collapse of the movement many of these had fled to Switzerland. Others, dissatisfied with the political conditions of Germany or attracted by the amenities of the country, had accepted posts at the Swiss Universities before the commotions. From Weimar the fame of *Lohengrin* spread through the German-speaking countries, and its composer soon became a leading member of a distinguished circle. He speaks with wonder of the strange atmosphere which he always

created around him wherever he went. Among his more intimate friends should be mentioned Georg Herwegh, a writer who attained great celebrity through his patriotic poetry. He was a violent revolutionary, and long before 1848 had so compromised himself with the Prussian Government that he had to flee to Paris. After the outbreak he had led a free company of French and Germans into Baden, but the venture had ended in a fiasco. More important is Gottfried Keller, a born Swiss, two years younger than Wagner, whose fame was established by his novel, *Der grüne Heinrich*, in 1854. Gottfried Semper, the Saxon Christopher Wren, is well known to every visitor to that most beautiful of modern capitals, Dresden. During his fifteen years of residence he built the old *Hoftheater*, the Picture Gallery, the New Museum and the Synagogue—nearly all the buildings which make Dresden what it is. After the revolution he went to Paris, and was in London for a time, where he prepared designs for the South Kensington Museum and for the Wellington funeral car. He came to Zurich in 1855 as Professor of Architecture at the *Polytechnicum*, and at a later date had some share in the architecture of Vienna. Of his designs for the projected Wagner Theatre at Munich and Bayreuth we shall speak later. The name of Ettmüller is still honourably remembered by students of old Germanic literature. He was now Professor in the Zurich *Gymnasium*, and later at the University, where he spent the rest of his life, a familiar figure in the town "with his long white beard, as if stiff with northern ice, looking like some wonderful saint"—thus he is described by Frau Wille. Wagner turned to him for advice and direction in his studies of Eddic literature, and they were much together during these years. Another of the Saxon refugees was an advocate named Marschall von Bieberstein. Wagner had been associated with him during the revolution, and now met him again in Zurich. In Bieberstein's house he was introduced to a young, recently-married couple, named Wesendonk. The husband was a wealthy merchant from the Rhine, partner in a large firm of silk merchants in New York. The Wesendonks had come to Zurich in 1851, and eventually

settled there; in the meantime they were living in an hotel. The wife, Mathilde Wesendonk, a lady of highly-cultured tastes and quite unspoiled—she describes her mind at that time as a white, blank sheet of paper—was also from the Rhine. She received her first impressions of Wagner from his conducting of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony at a concert in Zurich, one of three subscription concerts which he had been invited to direct. Each concert included a symphony of Beethoven, with one of his overtures, the third the overture to *Tannhäuser*. Wagner writes to Uhlig in high appreciation of the performance of the orchestra, which had been reinforced for the occasion from the neighbouring towns. A representation of his *Fliegender Holländer*, partly re-orchestrated, was also given, and was so successful that it was repeated three times within the week, and would have been continued had not the company been bound by other engagements. Wagner, however, received nothing from this success; on the contrary, a portion of the expenses fell upon his shoulders.

Among the works performed was the *Coriolanus* Overture, to which Wagner wrote an explanatory programme,[1] valuable on account of the views which it expresses on the interpretation especially of Beethoven's more mature works. It should be read in connection with his letter to Uhlig of February 15th.[2] I quote from the letter:

> The characteristic mark of Beethoven's great compositions is that they are real poems; there is an attempt to represent a real object . . . The essence of Beethoven's larger works is that the music in them is secondary (*dass sie nur in letzter Linie Musik sind*); the main thing is the poetic object.

Again he writes:

> So long as a composition does not express any positive poetic object it may be called easy to understand; it is, in fact, here not a matter of understanding at all. But when the musical expression is conditioned by such an object the language becomes incomprehensible—unless indeed the object be indicated by some other means than music.

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, v. 173. [2] No. 55 of the collection (p. 157).

But, he adds, the interpretation of the composer's intention is apt to become grotesque and trivial if the interpreter is not entirely familiar with the characteristic elements of the composition. The object may have been subconsciously in the composer's mind, and few may venture to disclose his intention. We know from Beethoven's recorded sayings to Ferdinard Ries, Czerny and others that this was his own view ;[1] he even at one time purposed indicating the objects which were in his mind by titles, at least for some of his works. Wagner then in the article illustrates Beethoven's overture by Shakespeare's play, motive by motive. He writes :

> The whole complex political picture could be treated by the poet, but not by the musician, who can only express moods, feelings, passions and their opposites, not political relations. Of these Beethoven selects one, the most decisive, and collects it into a focus, the true, purely human feeling. . . . It is the scene between Coriolanus, his mother and his wife.

Clearly he does not intend to lend his sanction to " programme-music," or to impose any particular programme upon the hearer ; each mind will form its own picture. In the last extract he distinguishes between the object and the mood which it awakens ; in the others it is this distinction which he intends to emphasise by the words " poetic object."

In May Wagner went with Herwegh for his health to a country place a short way down the lake, called *Rinderknecht*, where he became friendly with a family named Wille, who were living on their estate, Marienfeld. Dr. François Wille had been a journalist and a deputy at the Frankfort Parliament, but had now retired from public life. His wife, then a middle-aged lady, had published a volume of poems and a novel. They had come to Marienfeld in 1851, and had purchased the estate. Hearing from Ettmüller that Wagner was in the neighbourhood, they invited him to their house. He and Herwegh spent many a convivial day with the Willes before

[1] Schindler, fourth edition (1871), ii. 209, 219 *sqq*. See also especially Thayer-Deiters, iv. 206.

returning to Zurich. Here, in the month of June, the text of *Die Walküre* was written. Immediately after his return he set out alone on a long walking-tour through the highlands of Switzerland and across the Italian frontier. Starting from Alpnacht, on the Lake of Lucerne, he went up the Haslithal till he struck the Rhone at Obergestelen, and thence down the Valle d'Antigorio to the Italian lakes, returning home through Chamounix and Geneva.

The Weimar performance of *Lohengrin* was now beginning to bear fruit. Enquiries came from many theatres in Germany, from Leipzig, Frankfort, Wiesbaden, and from many more. Especially *Tannhäuser* was in request; in Schwerin it was given several times early in 1852, in Breslau fourteen times in the course of the year. Wagner was as immovable as ever in his determination not to concede the right of performance without a guarantee that his intentions would be rigidly followed. "I don't care a bit," he writes in a letter, "whether my works are performed; I only care that they shall be given as I have conceived them. Whoever cannot or will not do that may leave them alone." Especially he mistrusted the large towns with their *Hoftheater*. In Berlin, where the Princess of Prussia, afterwards Kaiserin Augusta, was his friend, there was a desire to give *Tannhäuser*. He made it a condition that Liszt should be summoned to conduct. To this the *Intendant*, von Hülsen, could not agree, and the performance did not take place.

In view of the growing demand for *Tannhäuser*, and of the impossibility of communicating his wishes singly to each theatre, he wrote a pamphlet with exact directions on every detail.[1] In Dresden, where, as he believed, his work had been imperfectly understood by the singers, he had admitted certain alterations, only as a makeshift, under special conditions, to save the performance. The directors of other theatres, however, assumed that they had been definitely approved by

[1] Long afterwards he tells us that he had never heard of a single person who had read the pamphlet. In 1864 he found it in Munich unopened. It is published in *Ges. Schr.*, v. 123.

the composer. Wagner now insisted upon the work being given as he wrote it.

Early in November he completed the text of *Das Rheingold*, and after a three days' trip into the Bernese Alps immediately set to work revising *Siegfried's Tod*. He expanded the plan of the drama in accordance with a grandiose idea which is lurking in the Edda itself. Wagner's earlier version ends with the death of Brünnhilde and Siegfried; but now the mundane catastrophe is made to appear as an echo of the destiny of the gods of Walhall, and above the pyre of the heroes there rises a vision of the gods meeting their doom. In accordance therewith the scene with the Walküren on Brünnhilde's rock in the first act was expunged, and another substituted in which one Walküre, Waltraute, relates the news from Walhall. The Norn scene at the beginning was also rewritten, and the whole text thoroughly revised, nearly one half of the lines undergoing changes, especially with a view to improving the alliteration. The title was at the same time altered to *Götterdämmerung*.

Meanwhile Wagner's circumstances were improving; he was now beginning to draw an income from royalties; at the same time the score and arrangement of *Lohengrin*, which he dedicated to Liszt, had been published by Breitkopf und Härtel. These and his other published works were selling briskly, the arrangements "half a dozen at a time," and personal notices appeared about him in the papers, with all the usual indications of incipient celebrity. In the following year, 1853, the demand for his works increased still further. Glasenapp gives a list of fifteen leading theatres where *Tannhäuser* was performed in that year, always with unprecedented success. Only in Dresden, where it was revived, the Court and the nobility conspicuously absented themselves, and after a few representations, owing to the hostility of the press it had to be withdrawn. Next in popularity was *Der Holländer*. *Lohengrin* made its way more slowly, but by 1854 it was well-established throughout Germany. There was talk of giving *Tannhäuser* in Paris, and in September,

1852, Belloni came to Zurich with Henri Vieuxtemps to negotiate with him. He represented that Wagner's name was now "incredibly famous" in Paris, and implored him not to neglect the favourable moment. The translation could be arranged for with the aid of Herwegh; Roger was a thoroughly satisfactory tenor for the title-rôle; his own niece Johanna was just about to sing in Paris, and so would be available for "Elisabeth," and he himself could superintend the rehearsals. It was all in vain; he told them that he had other work to do; nothing would induce him to give his consent.

The favourable turn in his fortunes might have given him an opportunity to pay off some portion of the crushing burden of his debts, but this never seems to have occurred to him. Some of the debts were owing to speculators, who, no doubt, were well able to protect themselves; but no thought of the many personal friends who had supplied his needs, often from very scanty means, seems to have troubled his mind. He was making plans for building himself a small house where he could work in peace, for frequent travelling to refresh his mind. All this time he was giving pecuniary assistance to his wife's mother, who was living in great poverty in Dresden. Everybody with whom he had any relations had to serve his art according to their abilities and opportunities; those who had nothing else to offer must contribute money, and his attitude towards them was that of a merciless tyrant. He had constituted Uhlig, a busy professional man earning his own living, and now seriously ailing, his business manager in Germany, and one has only to read Wagner's numerous letters to him to realise how he was made to slave. Yet he rendered his services willingly and never complained. Chordirektor Fischer, to save expense, copied out the entire full score of *Lohengrin* with his own hand. The touching devotion of his friends was no doubt in part due to the feeling that he was suffering in a cause which was also their own.

While engaged on *Das Rheingold* he read the ghazals of Hafiz and wrote in the most exaggerated terms of enthusiasm regarding them. Goethe had forty years earlier been similarly

attracted to the Sufi poet. By the end of the year the whole poem of the trilogy as we now have it was complete. At Christmas he read it to the family circle at Marienfeld, and later publicly at Zurich. He then had a small number of copies printed at his own expense for distribution to his friends. Immediately after its completion a heavy calamity fell upon him in the death of his faithful friend and willing helper in need Theodor Uhlig, of rapid consumption.

On February 16th *Der fliegende Holländer* was produced in Weimar before a very brilliant gathering of princes, including the Dukes of Coburg and of Mecklenburg, the Heirs Apparent of Prussia and of Meiningen, Princesses Carl and Charlotte of Prussia, with other princes, ambassadors, generals, etc. Liszt had made a pianoforte arrangement of the reception scene from *Tannhäuser* and of the processional music from *Lohengrin*. On May 18th, with the aid of the Zurich Musical Society, which undertook the finances, he arranged a grand concert of selections from his works in historical order, from *Rienzi* to *Lohengrin*. Instrumental performers of the first rank were engaged from various parts of Germany, and thus an orchestra of seventy-two men was collected, with a chorus of 150 singers. For the one solo (Senta's ballad) a local soprano was engaged, Emilie Heim, the wife of a Musikdirektor with whom Wagner was befriended. Before the concert he read publicly to all who had tickets the text of the three works, and further, to aid them in understanding the pieces, he distributed explanatory programmes, indicating shortly the dramatic situations. The success was beyond all expectation. The orchestra, in a recess specially constructed to enhance the resonance, sounded "infinitely clear and fine." On taking his place at the conductor's desk he received an overwhelming ovation; he was half buried in wreaths and flowers. On the 19th the musicians were feasted by the Society; on the 20th the concert was repeated, and again on the 22nd, his fortieth birthday, when he received another ovation, if possible surpassing the first. At the end a congratulatory poem was recited by a member of the chorus, and a young lady, one of

the daughters of his former host, Alexander Müller, was deputed in the name of the Society to present him with a silver cup as a memento of the festivities.

Apart from such occasional glimpses of sunshine Wagner was suffering from deep depression. The long, weary hope which he had hitherto cherished seemed farther from fulfilment than ever, and the strain of continued disappointment was telling severely upon his health. His letters to Liszt are very despondent. He hoped that the Weimar Court, which was very favourable to him, might exert some influence upon the King of Saxony. Liszt neglected no opportunity of pleading his cause, but it was all in vain; the only response was an official notification of the Saxon Government renewing the warrant against him, and Alexander Ritter, who had married Wagner's niece, Franziska, a daughter of Albert, was harassed by the Weimar police because his mother was assisting Wagner. "Really," remarked Frau Ritter, "the idea that anyone can like Wagner's music without being guilty of high treason seems too exalted for the German police." Liszt's temper under Wagner's querulous reproaches can only be called angelic. To cheer the exile in some degree he promised to visit him in the course of the summer, and if possible to bring Joachim and Robert Franz, who were at that time not personally known to him. Liszt himself arrived on July 2nd, but his stay was short—a week only. Nevertheless, they were able to make a trip together with Herwegh to the Lake of Lucerne. The principal topic of discussion was the project for the performance of the trilogy. With existing theatres Wagner would have nothing to do; the work could only be adequately given in a special building erected for the purpose. The most suitable place for such an enterprise was indisputably Weimar, but Weimar was ruled out by his exile. Moreover, there was the question of funds. The Grand Duke and the Municipal Authorities have been much blamed for not having responded to a plan which would have made Weimar for the next sixty years what it had been before, the intellectual capital of Germany, but it is difficult to know what they could have

done. The scheme was, as business, highly speculative; for who could have foreseen at that time what the indomitable will of one man would eventually accomplish? Zurich was free from some of the objections to Weimar, but the financial difficulty was the same. The sum required was variously estimated: Wagner put it at 10,000 thalers (£1,500), but Wille, the man of business, thought a million would be nearer the truth, and as the seats were not to be sold, but given away, there was no prospect of any direct return. "Le million se trouvera," said Liszt. Strassburg was also suggested as a suitable place for the production.

The rest of the summer after Liszt's departure was spent on excursions, first with Herwegh among the glaciers, and then to Turin, Genoa, Spezzia and Milan. On October 6th he went to Basel, once more to meet Liszt, who brought with him a whole troop of young and ardent Wagnerites from among his Weimar "Murls," von Bülow, Joachim, Cornelius, Pruckner, Reményi, the Hungarian violinist, and Richard Pohl, afterwards one of the foremost of Wagnerite journalists, all of whom made the long journey expressly to do him homage. On the following day the Princess Wittgenstein arrived with her beautiful daughter Marie, aged fifteen. A piano was produced in their hotel, and Liszt played them Beethoven's Op. 106. Then the party adjourned to Strassburg, whence the younger members returned to Germany, while Liszt and Wagner with the ladies went on to Paris. Liszt had not seen his three children for eight years; the two daughters, Blandine, aged eighteen, and Cosima, aged sixteen, were both living in Paris with their governess. Wagner was at once introduced to them and spent the evening at their house, whither Berlioz was also invited to meet him. While in Paris he again met the Comtesse Kalergis-Nesselrode.

By the end of October he was back in Zurich, where, refreshed by the distractions of the summer, he at once joyfully settled down to the composition of *Das Rheingold*. But his creditors were pressing him, and it was necessary that he should make some effort to settle his finances. It was evident that

his operas would soon become established in every theatre in Germany, and that he could reckon upon drawing a modest but regular income from the royalties. He had, however, with his usual sanguine temperament, anticipated his prospects, and considerable payments would fall due at the coming Christmas. To meet them he proposed to sell the performing rights of *Lohengrin*, so far as they were not already disposed of, to Breitkopf und Härtel, and offered them through Liszt for 632 louis d'ors (about £500). It was a fair business offer, and Liszt had every hope of its being accepted, and went to Leipzig to lay it before Dr. Härtel, the head of the firm. Why he refused it is not known, but Liszt conjectures that it may have been due to the influence of Härtel's friend, Otto Jahn, the well-known philologist and biographer of Mozart, who was a bitter opponent of Wagner. Another attempt to do business with a Berlin house also came to nothing, owing, it is said, to a disastrous performance of the work in Leipzig. From the same cause the applications for the right of performance came in far less rapidly than he had expected.

With the renewed worry his moods of feverish depression returned, alternating with fits of hysterical gaiety. He could not sleep, and the only relief was by absorption in his work. In a letter to Fischer he hopes to have the whole trilogy finished by the spring of 1856. Then, after building the theatre, he thought the work might be produced in 1858. His industry and the rapidity of his work would be almost incredible, did we not know of similar feats by other composers. In the course of the winter, in addition to his compositions, he conducted large orchestral concerts every fortnight, and by light of the original score, which he procured from Paris, and of his experience at the performance, he wrote an article for the *Neue Zeitschrift* on the adaptation of Gluck's overture to *Iphigénie en Aulide* for concert use.[1] On May 28th the score of *Rheingold* was finished, ready to be fair copied, and he

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, v. 111.

soon began *Die Walküre*, the first draft of which occupied him until the end of the year. He needed an expert copyist to make the fair copies, and wrote to Liszt to send him one, but it was impossible to find anyone sufficiently skilled to master the intricacies of the score.

His affairs were going from bad to worse. To make some money he accepted an invitation to conduct at a festival at Sion (Ct. Valais) Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and his own *Tannhäuser* Overture, but on arriving for the rehearsal, finding the orchestra inadequate, he abruptly left the hall and the town. Vainly he appealed to Brendel, to Liszt, to Avenarius; no one could help him. His health was failing, and to add to his distress—and his expenses—Minna, under the hardships and anxieties of her life began to develop symptoms of the heart-trouble which followed her during the rest of her life. Rest and a change of surroundings were imperative; she went first to the Lake of Lucerne and then on a two months' visit to her parents and friends in Germany. To work at composition under these harassing circumstances was impossible, and he employed himself in making the fair copy of *Das Rheingold* with a gold pen, a present from Frau Wesendonk. Liszt's article on *Der Holländer*, which appeared at this time, threw him into a paroxysm of joy.

It was in September of this year that he made his first acquaintance with the writings of Arthur Schopenhauer, whose *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* was brought to him by Herwegh. No person can read that profound work and remain quite the same as he was before. Wagner was electrified; it came upon him like a new revelation and cleared the thoughts which had long been fermenting in his mind. He speaks of it as a gift from Heaven in his solitude. He tells us that it was while under the spell of the serious mood induced by his reading of Schopenhauer that he conceived the idea of a new work—*Tristan und Isolde*. He hurriedly composed a sketch for the three acts after returning from a walk one afternoon in the autumn of 1854. In December he writes to Liszt:

> Never having myself enjoyed the real happiness of love, I mean to raise a monument to that most beautiful of all dreams. . . . I have conceived a *Tristan und Isolde*, the simplest but most full-blooded musical composition. With the black flag which waves at the end I will cover myself up—to die.[1]

It was first suggested to him by Karl Ritter, who was engaged upon a drama on the same subject. Ritter had selected the licentious incidents of the well-known legend for dramatic treatment; it is significant that Wagner from the first was only interested in its moral aspects. In this first sketch in the final scene he introduces Parsifal at the bedside of the dying Tristan; later this scene was expunged.

During the first two months of 1855 Wagner was occupied with the orchestration of the first act of *Die Walküre*, while continuing to conduct concerts in Zurich. He obtained the score of his *Faust* Overture, composed in Paris fifteen years before, rewrote it and gave it twice. *Tannhäuser* was also performed in Zurich, but although he superintended the preparation he did not at first conduct. He was pleased with the result, and was astonished on finding what could be achieved by an inadequate company when it came into personal touch with himself. At the repetition he consented to take the bâton. Since his first meeting with the Wesendonk family his friendship with them had been steadily growing. They showed their interest in him by many little attentions. He read them his texts, played Beethoven's sonatas and fragments from his own compositions to them, and composed a little piece for her album; when away he wrote to them regularly. He at first intended to dedicate his *Faust* Overture to Frau Wesendonk, but thought it inappropriate. His letters, addressed to her husband, are written in a tone of warm and familiar friendship.

In the last days of 1854 there had reached him an invitation from the Philharmonic Society of London to conduct the concerts in the following season. He replied asking whether there was to be a second conductor to take over the minor

[1] Letter of December 16th, 1854.

pieces, and whether he could have a free hand as regards rehearsals. He at once communicated the proposal to Liszt, who replied strongly urging him to accept it, but to go cautiously to work with the theatrical agents. Mr. Anderson, the Treasurer of the Society, came expressly to Zurich to arrange. Wagner was to have £200 for conducting eight concerts. It was a doubtful undertaking; not many months before his *Tannhäuser* Overture had failed entirely under Costa's direction. After some hesitation he accepted the offer. He left Zurich on February 26th, and after having spent a few days in Paris reached London on March 4th, staying the first night with one Ferdinand Praeger, near Dorset Square. Praeger was a teacher of music. Wagner was not known to him personally before this occasion, but had an introduction to him from the father of August Röckel, who was then living in Dresden. On the next morning Wagner moved to rooms at 22 Portland Terrace, Regent's Park.

Music in London was then entirely dominated by the tradition of Mendelssohn. The critical oracles were Henry Chorley of the *Athenæum* and Davison of *The Times*. The leading pianist was Arabella Goddard, and Sterndale Bennett was acclaimed as a second Mendelssohn. The Philharmonic Society with its sister the New Philharmonic, recently founded, gave concerts in Exeter Hall and Hanover Square Rooms; both were mainly supported by the wealthy and fashionable circles of society; their principal endeavour was to secure "star" musicians as conductors or executants. The opera was of the familiar Italian type, a place of resort for ladies to wear their jewelry and stockbrokers to transact their business, while singers performed musical athletics. In such unadulterated Philistinism Wagner was not likely to find much that was congenial. He bought a tall hat and became acquainted with the leaders of musical society, among whom were many whom he could regard with real respect, such as the French violinist Sainton. Amongst others he met Eduard Röckel, the brother of his friend, a teacher of music in Bath, and a lady from Hamburg with whom, though not personally known to

her, he had already corresponded, Malwida von Meysenburg. Here too he met his former Dresden friend, Hermann Franck, who was living in Brighton and came up to town to renew his acquaintance with the *Meister*. But by far the most important friend whom he made in London was Karl Klindworth, then aged twenty-five and just beginning life as a teacher of the pianoforte in London. He had long been a devoted admirer of Wagner, and was specially introduced to him by Liszt, whose pupil he had been in Weimar. He at once began making a piano arrangement of the first act of *Die Walküre*. Bülow had already begun to work on *Rheingold*, but later resigned it to Klindworth. While in London Wagner read Dante's *Divina Commedia*, on which Liszt was just beginning to plan his great symphony, and wrote some very interesting observations on it to Liszt.[1] All the time he was burning to complete the orchestration of *Die Walküre*, but was little in the mood for composition amid his London environment. His *Faust* Overture was being engraved in score and parts by Breitkopf und Härtel, who gave him 20 louis d'ors (£16) for the publishing rights. On the whole his reception in London was encouraging. The public was at least as responsive as an English audience ever is with a new artist; only, as ever, the press was bitterly hostile. He was pleased with his orchestra: "the music flowed like water from the parish fountain," but under Costa it had fallen into bad habits; it had no real forte and no real piano, but played everything *mezzo-forte*. At the fourth concert, on May 2nd, when some of the players rebelled against his *tempi* there was very nearly a breach between him and the Direction; at the next concert, however, his *Tannhäuser* Overture was received with a storm of enthusiastic applause, and at the seventh concert, on June 11th, it was repeated by special command of the Queen, who was present with Prince Albert. During the pause she sent for him and expressed herself most graciously in appreciation of his work. The last concert, on June 25th, was the occasion of an ovation such as had seldom

[1] Letter of June 7th, 1855.

been seen at those concerts, and at the same time of a demonstration against the press:

> The orchestra solemnly rose to its feet, and with the entire crowded hall broke into such long-continued applause and clapping that I felt really embarrassed. Each member of the orchestra crowded up to bid me farewell and to press my hand; even from the public men and women held up their hands for me to clasp.

Before leaving London he again met Berlioz, who was conducting at the New Philharmonic. They were a good deal together, for though they chaffed each other unmercifully they were excellent friends. No one will dispute his judgment of Berlioz as "extraordinarily gifted," though "with strange weaknesses." He now speaks of their "hearty and intimate" friendship, while Berlioz writes in his witty way: "Something in Wagner is wonderfully attractive to me, though both are rough, our roughnesses fit each other ." After parting they corresponded, and Berlioz sent him a copy of his *Soirées de l'Orchestre*, which had just appeared. On paying his farewell call to Mr. Hogarth, the Secretary of the Society, Wagner met and, much to his amusement, was introduced to Giacomo Meyerbeer! It is worth mentioning that he was a frequent visitor to the London theatres, and speaks very appreciatively of the "correctness and precision" of the acting. But what delighted him most was a pantomime at the Adelphi Theatre, where he saw a medley of "Red Riding Hood," "Cinderella," and other fairy-tales.

On returning to Switzerland after a short stay with his wife on the Lake of Lucerne he set to work in earnest to complete the score of *Die Walküre*. He was seriously troubled with erysipelas of the face, a most painful complaint, to which he had always been subject, and now, when confined to his bed, he occupied himself with Burnouf's *Histoire du Bouddhisme*. He made a brief sketch for a drama on a Buddhist subject, entitled *Die Sieger*.[1] His other work progressed slowly by reason of his continual illness, but by the following spring the

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, xi. 325.

full score of *Die Walküre* was ready. Before leaving London he had received an invitation from America to conduct concerts. It was now made to him formally, but nothing came of it. He was entirely absorbed in his own compositions. To his great joy his friend from the Dresden days, Gottfried Semper, was appointed Professor at the Zurich University. Karl Ritter also came to settle there with a friend named von Hornstein, an ardent but rather weak-minded admirer of Schopenhauer. Liszt had promised to visit him at Christmas, but the visit had to be postponed owing to the state of Wagner's health. During the better part of the year 1856 he was suffering agonies from renewed attacks of his complaint, and there is little to relate. On his forty-third birthday Liszt was able to send him a present of 1,000 francs. In May he received a visit from Tichatschek, and from July to the end of August he was undergoing treatment at Mornex, near Geneva, for some weeks. The Grand Duke of Weimar, urged by Liszt, was again making efforts to procure his amnesty; there was even a talk of providing him with a residence in the Wartburg, where he would have the needful repose to continue his work, but it was not to be. He offered the publishing rights of the *Ring* to Breitkopf und Härtel, asking 10,000 francs for each play, but the offer was not accepted. In October Liszt arrived with the Princess and her daughter. Some time was spent in a round of gaiety; Liszt played the first act of *Die Walküre*, while Wagner sang the men's parts and Frau Heim took "Sieglinde." Unhappily, their pleasure was marred by a serious illness of Liszt, which delayed his departure, and towards the end of November, when he was better, they were both invited to conduct at a concert at St. Gall. Liszt conducted two of his symphonic poems, Wagner the *Eroica*. This appearance gave great offence to his friends in Zurich, where he refused to take any part in the concerts. One unfortunate result of the visit was a quarrel between Liszt and Karl Ritter, in consequence of which Wagner felt himself bound to renounce the stipend which he was receiving from Ritter's mother.[1]

[1] It was renewed later and continued till 1858.

Rumours of war were abroad: the Canton of Neufchatel was claimed by Prussia, and an invasion threatened. Wagner, disheartened with continual disturbances to his work, unable to obtain rest, weakened by ill-health, his head teeming with new projects, was gradually losing heart in his composition of the *Ring*, and in June, 1857, definitely laid it aside, not to resume it for many years.

CHAPTER XVIII

DAS ASYL

During the winter 1856–57 the Wesendonks were away in Paris. They had finally settled upon Zurich as their permanent home, and had purchased an extensive property in a beautiful situation known as *Am Grünen Hügel*, and the mansion for their residence was being built during their absence. Wagner maintained a brisk correspondence with Otto Wesendonk while he was abroad. Ever since their friendship began the Wesendonks had by numerous little attentions in a delicate and tactful way afforded proof of their sympathy with his sufferings and their appreciation of his artistic aims. Adjoining their property was a small plot of land with a cottage; with the intention of providing a quiet home where Wagner could continue his work at peace, undisturbed by street music, hammering blacksmiths and the other amenities of town life, Herr Wesendonk purchased the land and the cottage, had the necessary alterations made to convert the latter into a convenient residence, and wrote to Wagner from Paris inviting him to make his home there, paying a moderate rent. Wagner, it is needless to say, was deeply touched. He had for some time been indulging in dreams of building a house for himself with the proceeds of the *Ring*, and had amused himself with making exact architectural drawings. He accepted the offer and superintended the alterations. It was during a pause in the work, on a peaceful Good Friday morning, when alone in the house amid the scenery of the Swiss lake, that he wrote the first sketch for *Parsifal*. In the spring he wrote a long letter to the young Princess Marie Wittgenstein on Liszt's *Symphonische Dichtungen*.[1]

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, v. 182.

At the end of April he entered the cottage which, as he fondly believed, was to be the home of his future life. Everything had been arranged with considerate forethought to suit his luxurious tastes—his working-table at the window with an inspiring view over the lake to the Alps, and a well-ordered garden. He named the house *Das Asyl*, "The Refuge."

The immediate cause of his abandonment of the *Ring* was the failure of the negotiations which he had recently renewed with Breitkopf und Härtel. The outlook in Germany was indeed hopeless; the work could not possibly be produced in that country without his personal presence, and there was no prospect of any concession, or even of a temporary visit being permitted by the Saxon Government. He had completed the whole of the first act of *Siegfried*, and sketched all the second. Just after he had entered his new home there came an invitation from a very unexpected quarter. The Emperor of Brazil was a great lover of music, and maintained an Italian opera of great excellence. He knew something of Wagner's works, and now despatched a representative to Zurich with a proposal that Wagner should compose an opera specially for Rio de Janeiro and come over to conduct it. Wagner had two sketches ready, *Tristan* and *Die Sieger;* he chose *Tristan*, and began to work on it for the Italian opera at Rio. It was to be a good practicable work, to bring in a good sum of money quickly—a "pot-boiler," in fact.[1]

Early in July he received a visit from Eduard Devrient, the second and best known of the three brothers Karl, Eduard and Emil. Wagner had been friendly with him in Dresden, and greatly admired his full and scholarly *History of German Acting*, for long the standard work on the subject. Devrient was now Director of the Grand Ducal Theatre in Baden, and lived in Karlsruhe. The Grand Duke had recently married a Princess of Prussia, one of Wagner's greatest admirers. She exerted all her influence in his behalf; his works were regularly performed at Karlsruhe, the Grand Duchess herself frequently

[1] *Letters to Liszt*, ii. 175, June 28th, 1857.

attending the rehearsals. In gratitude for her efforts Wagner had early in the year written to her, and sent as a contribution to her album a copy of his latest composition, the final scene of *Die Walküre*. Devrient when in Zurich suggested to him, in view of his favour with the Baden Court, that he should bring out his new work at Karlsruhe, and soon after his return Wagner received an autograph letter from the Grand Duke, thanking him for the present to his wife and promising to use his influence to procure his amnesty. He kept his word, and was among the most active of the princes of Germany in his efforts on behalf of Wagner. However Wagner may have made light of it, it is clear that what was preying upon his mind and undermining his health was his exile. He was badly needed in Germany. Could he only have been personally present to superintend the performances of his works he could have saved them from mutilation, and probably would have made sufficient money to enable him to pay off some of his debts.

The summer brought many more visitors to the *Asyl*. Ferdinand Praeger came from England, Robert Franz, Richard Pohl, and finally Hans von Bülow with his bride, Liszt's daughter, Cosima.[1] They had much music together, Bülow playing the difficult *Siegfried* music straight from the scribbled sketches, while Wagner sang "with colossal self-forgetfulness." After they were gone, in the early days of October, he settled down to the composition of *Tristan*, completing the first act within the year. Without delay he began negotiations with Breitkopf und Härtel for the publication of the score, demanding 400 louis d'or (£320). They replied with an offer of 100 for five years, after which the profits were to be shared; this he was obliged to accept. In accordance with his invariable habit—for Wagner, like Goethe, never spared his friends when he could gather an audience—he read *Tristan* to a select circle. Semper's criticism of the text on this occasion was that Wagner took everything much too seriously, he held that the province

[1] The other daughter, Blandine, was married some weeks later to Emile Ollivier, then a rising young barrister.

of art was to break the edge of a tragic subject, so as to make it pleasurable, and instances Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as tragedy in masquerade. Gottfried Keller, on the other hand, approved of it as it was, and admired its intense condensation; but "they all shook their heads." As he had heard nothing more from Brazil, he now proposed bringing out the work in the following year in Strassburg, with Albert Niemann and Louise Meyer-Dustmann, two young singers just rising into fame. He had given his three earlier operas to the winds,[1] and they had spread through the whole of Germany. Every theatre which could command the means hastened to put them on the stage—well or badly, as they chose—certain of reaping a rich harvest with enhanced entrance prices. Even *Rienzi* was revived and given here and there. Wagner gained little pecuniary benefit from the enthusiasm, since he had parted with most of his rights for money down. The two great capitals lingered the longest. In Berlin were Taubert and his former friend Dorn, to say nothing of his brother Albert, stage-manager, and his niece, Johanna, then the most celebrated *prima donna* of Germany. The Court, headed by the Princess Augusta, the wife of the Regent, with whom Alwine Frommann, always Wagner's active friend, had great influence, was his strongest supporter, but the *Intendant*, von Hülsen, is said to have been adverse, and only to have yielded to pressure from above. In Vienna the Court was bitterly opposed to Wagner, mainly from political reasons; it was considered indecent for a Court opera to give works by a political refugee, but *Tannhäuser* was at last given in 1857, and was followed by the others.

In January, 1858, he went to Paris, ostensibly for the protection of his rights in *Tannhäuser*, visiting Emile Ollivier, who made him discourse on art and opera to a concourse of famous lawyers. The visit was short, but was made noteworthy by a present of a magnificent grand pianoforte from Madame Erard. By February 5th he was back in Zurich. He had recently become acquainted with the works of the Spanish

[1] Letter to Liszt of October, 1854.

dramatist Calderon, and was absorbed in his plays; a long and interesting letter to Liszt speaks of the deep impression which they made upon him.[1]

It was during the months of Wagner's residence at the *Asyl* that Mathilde Wesendonk wrote some short lyrics for which he composed the music. They were published later by Schott under the title *Fünf Gedichte*. Rightly to appreciate the events of the fateful years 1857–58 it is necessary to realise Wagner's mental condition. It is impossible for anyone who reads the letters of his later Zurich period and follows the abrupt moods, the sudden decisions, the fitful schemes, the growing nervous depression of that time, bordering on hypochondria, to escape the conviction that under the stress of exile, debt and deferred hope he was suffering from a grave nervous break-down. For the moment he seems to have been saved by the timely and judicious kindness of the Wesendonks. He was now for the first time in his life at rest. His daily visits at the mansion afforded him the society and intellectual companionship which he needed. Otto Wesendonk, less poetically disposed than his wife, could still follow sympathetically their thoughts and join in their conversation. She, dreamy, imaginative, highly strung, while perfectly self-possessed and wise beyond her years, threw herself passionately into the new artistic world which was growing before her. There never was and never could be any suggestion of a blameworthy relation between her and Wagner. The coarsest of Wagner's critics have never ventured to assert such a thing; they content themselves with sneers and insinuations. The bond between them was artistic and intellectual. She was on the best of terms with her husband, had no secrets from him, and all that she did was by his advice and with his approval. There was never at any time a breach between him and Wagner, and their friendship only ended with Wagner's death. Wagner, however, in the weak, neurotic condition that he was in seems for the time to have completely lost his head. Although he

[1] January 24th to 25th, 1858.

perfectly realised the position, and knew very well that "love" in the common acceptation of the term was out of the question, he addressed her in the language of passion, and was incautious enough to express himself in writing in a similar strain, forgetting how written papers might be misused after his death. Exactly how she replied we do not know, as only very few of her letters have been preserved; these are friendly and warm, but perfectly discreet. We may, however, gather enough to judge of her conduct in a situation of unprecedented difficulty. To praise it would be impertinence, but we may acknowledge the incalculable debt which we owe to her. Trusting to the simple innocence of her own heart, she accepted the immense responsibility which rested upon her, and acted in accordance with her own noble nature. Had she done what most women would have done, dismissed her impetuous lover, the last hope of his continuing his compositions would have been lost; it would probably have been his death. So she gave him her friendship—fully, unreservedly, so far as was honourably possible. When it is said that *Tristan und Isolde* is a poetic rendering of the love of Wagner and Mathilde Wesendonk, such a view involves a radical misconception; there is not a single feature in common between the two situations, and we know that the *Tristan* drama was sketched years before the crisis of their intimacy. But it is true that he was animated by her intelligent sympathy, supported and strengthened by her friendship to bear the strain of bringing forth the most intense of all his compositions. For the moment he broke down; after the first act he was unable to continue, and his sudden visit to Paris in January was intended to divert his mind and enable him to recover his faculties.

It soon became obvious that the situation could not continue. If nothing else had happened the gossip of the town was making it impossible. In order to meet it by a direct proof of his friendship for Wagner Wesendonk arranged an orchestral concert in his house, at which Wagner conducted. On April 7th matters were brought to a crisis by Minna intercepting a letter from her husband to Mathilde. What the letter contained we do

not know; it has, so far as I know, never been published, and, let us hope, never will be. Wagner writes a little later to his sister Klara: "It contained just what ought to have quieted her, for the theme was *renunciation*." All evidence, from whatever source, is tainted with the heated partisanship with which Wagner's personality is surrounded, and it is only right that documents which have been unaccountably withheld from publication for more than half a century should be viewed with suspicion. It matters, however, little to us what was in the letter. Minna had ample grounds for considering herself wronged, and went straight to Frau Wesendonk. She has been much blamed for her action, but probably most women would have done the same. She was not wanting in good nature, and the two ladies, who had hitherto always been friendly together, could easily have come to an understanding but for the inconceivable tactlessness with which she handled her good case. Her first remark: "Had I been an ordinary woman I should have taken the letter to your husband" was a coarse insult, and at once put an end to all possibility of an explanation. Nothing could have been more untrue than the insinuation which it implied; nothing could bring into stronger relief the contrast between the two women. Wagner was aghast when she told him what she had done, and tried to bring home to her the consequences which must result to herself and to him. But however ill-advised was her action, a large share of blame must be apportioned to Wagner himself for having kept her in the dark as to the true nature of his relations with the Wesendonks. Between *them* all had been frank and open, and they naturally had thought that it was the same with Wagner and his wife, that Minna fully understood and acquiesced in his friendship with Mathilde. When her conduct proved that it was not so they were both deeply offended with Wagner; still, for his sake they were anxious to avoid a breach. Minna was already ailing, and now her health broke down entirely; she had another heart-seizure and suffered intense pain. Wagner, who could never bear to see her suffering, nursed her with the

utmost tenderness. As soon as she was able to travel he sent her away to Brestenberg in Aargau for medical treatment. For some time she was hovering between life and death, and it was three months before she was able to return to Zurich.

Wagner was now left alone in the *Asyl*. In February he had through Fischer in Dresden submitted a petition to Prince Albert of Saxony praying him to use his influence to procure an amnesty. There is no record of any reply having been sent, or even of its having reached its destination. The proofs of the first act of *Tristan* were now ready, and Breitkopf und Härtel remitted to him the first instalment of the honorarium agreed upon. Von Bülow, too, had completed the arrangement. He now sketched the second act to the end, but did not proceed at once to the orchestration.

Soon after Minna's departure there came to Wagner in Zurich a youth with a letter from Liszt introducing him as one of his pupils, a "Wunderkerl," who would "belabour his piano in proper style." His name was Karl Tausig, and he came from Warsaw. He was then only sixteen, and had been studying with Liszt for over two years; in Vienna he was already known as "the Liszt of the future." He astonished Wagner as much by his uncouth manners as with his astounding virtuosity:

> He is a terrible youth. At one moment it is his extraordinary intelligence which amazes me, at another his headlong manner. He will develop into something quite extraordinary—if indeed he comes to anything at all. He frightens me with his terrible smoking of strong cigars, and his tea-drinking, as well as his entire lack of any promise of a beard. . . . but he gets no spirits or rum from me.

Liszt, too, had warned Wagner, and wrote not altogether favourably of the personality of the young lion. He stayed for some months in Zurich; Wagner did what he could for him, but could not invite him to stay in his house because of the incessant pianoforte playing.

In June an event occurred which was well calculated to cheer his spirits. The Grand Duke of Weimar notified him

that he was about to pass through Lucerne, and would be glad to meet him there. Wagner accordingly made the short journey to Lucerne and was received in audience by the Grand Duke, and thus enabled to put the case for his amnesty personally before him. Many more visitors arrived in Zurich in the course of the summer. Tichatschek had just recovered from a severe illness and came to Switzerland to recruit his health. Wagner loved his company and his simple child-like nature. He had quite forgiven Wagner's strictures on his rendering of *Tannhäuser*. The next to come was Albert Niemann. The disadvantage of having the two greatest Wagnerian tenors together at once was that neither of them would sing in the presence of the other! Later, in July, came the von Bülows, with Cosima's mother, the Comtesse d'Agoult[1] from Paris. Klindworth and Karl Ritter were also of the party, and there was much music. In July Minna returned; she was still in a very weak condition and needed a thorough change of surroundings. Very soon after the catastrophe the Wesendonks had sought diversion in a tour through Italy; after their return efforts were made to renew the old cordial relations, but with little success. Wagner himself felt the impossibility of continuing his work in Zurich, especially with the distractions caused by the constant successions of visitors. Minna was irreconcilable; Mathilde equally so. The thundery atmosphere was too heavy not to be noticed by their guests; von Bülow would have fain gone elsewhere. He writes to Pohl: "Wagner is more *difficile* in intercourse than before; but his fundamentally noble nature has not suffered." More and more it became clear that their days in Zurich were numbered. The strain of living longer with her husband, bravely borne for so many years, must inevitably be fatal to Minna; a separation was imperative, but it should be in all friendship, and with the hope that when his amnesty was granted they would be re-united in Germany. On August 17th the household was broken up. They both left

[1] Well known in French literature as Daniel Stern.

Zurich, departing in opposite directions, she for Dresden, he for Geneva, whence he wrote a long letter to his sister Klara narrating all the circumstances and asking her to be kind to Minna, "for after all she is unhappy."[1] In Dresden he also recommended her to the care of his old friend, Dr. Pusinelli. Wagner himself sought consolation in a diary, which he afterwards sent to Mathilde. Her vision is always before him; it is a rhapsodical soliloquy, with alternate moods of passionate longing and calm, silent resignation. A letter which he wrote to her was returned unopened; for news he had to write to Frau Wille.

The story of his abrupt departure was, of course, bruited everywhere in Zurich; the "scandal" was freely discussed in the local newspapers. As the best way of stopping the gossip Wesendonk invited Wagner to visit them for a few days. He went several times, and they returned his visits while he was in Lucerne. We must above all avoid judging continental habits and customs by English notions. Everyone who has seen much of human life knows that such friendships between a man and a woman as that contemplated by Wagner and Frau Wesendonk cannot endure, and in England, with less ideality and more practical common sense, we avoid them. But it is not so in Germany, where Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften* is a household book. When a false position has been established, however praiseworthy the intentions of the parties concerned, matters are apt to pass out of their control. Unquestionably the friendship between Wagner and Mathilde went much farther than had ever been foreseen when it began, and led to an *impasse* from which they found it difficult to extricate themselves. However friendly their feelings towards Wagner may still have been, it must have been with a long breath of relief that the Wesendonks saw him finally depart from their neighbourhood.

[1] *Familienbriefe;* letter to Klara Wolfram, August 20th, 1858.

CHAPTER XIX

VENICE, LUCERNE, PARIS

WAGNER had, when he fled from the *Asyl*, no definite purpose beyond that of escaping into a new environment, and went to Geneva to collect himself. Karl Ritter had told him much about Venice ; it was represented as the least noisy town in Europe, and so appeared to be a suitable place for him to settle in for a time and finish the score of *Tristan*. On August 29th he reached Venice with Karl Ritter and took apartments in the *Palazzo Giustiniani*. Here, under ideal conditions, living in the strictest retirement, he was able, after the arrival of his Erard grand, to continue his composition.

Liszt's position in Weimar, never very pleasant, was becoming more intolerable with every year. We remember how he had renounced a career of unparalleled brilliancy as an executant to occupy an obscure position on a humble salary in a small town that he might continue his life as a composer, and generally be able to exert an animating and purifying influence upon art. Whatever our individual judgment may be as regards his compositions, it might have been expected that a man of his intellectual and moral stature, towering above every musician of his day, except Wagner, would have been appreciated in the town which he honoured with his presence, but this was far from being the case ; both he and the circle which he gathered around him had to encounter bitter hostility, which was not diminished by his efforts in the cause of Wagner. The adverse party was especially strong in the press ; among those most hostile to him were Otto Jahn, Julian Schmidt, Hanslick, Bischoff, Hiller and Alexander von Wolzogen. In Weimar itself the Grand Duke, although

warmly attached to Liszt personally, was not particularly musical, his tastes being more especially in the direction of the spoken drama. The public was divided; so long as Liszt was working under a friendly *Intendant* he was able to hold his own, but in 1857 the direction of the Weimar theatre was taken over by Dingelstedt. Almost at the same time his party was seriously weakened by the defection of one of the most gifted of its younger members, Joseph Joachim, who in conjunction with Johannes Brahms, a young pianist and composer just rising into fame, published a manifesto expressing their abhorrence of the new "so-called North German school of music, which adopts in practice the principles of Brendel's journal,[1] and sets up new theories, unheard of before."

On December 15th, 1858, matters came to a head. Liszt, always making the cause of young talent his own, brought out a new opera, *Der Barbier von Bagdad*, by Peter Cornelius. There was a hostile demonstration at the theatre, and after finishing the performance Liszt laid down his bâton, declaring that he would never conduct there again. The "new-Weimar school" which had done so much to educate the public taste in art was a thing of the past, and Wagner's firmest stronghold in Germany was lost. It was more than anything else his support of Wagner that brought about the fall of Liszt. In a letter of April 26th, 1861, he says that his principal cause for resigning was his failure, from lack of funds, to obtain a hearing in Weimar for *Tristan* and the *Ring*.

In going to Venice Wagner incurred the risk of being arrested and sent to Saxony to be dealt with as a rebel by the Government. Venice belonged to Austria, but it was not part of the German Confederation, and the law was uncertain. Liszt, by the advice of the Grand Duke of Weimar, had written to dissuade him from going there, but the letter miscarried. Early in 1859 the Venice authorities, in pursuance of a request from the Saxon Government ordered him to leave the town. He was then suffering from dysentery followed by an extremely

[1] *Die Neue Zetischrift fur Musik.*

painful abscess in the leg, and was unable to move. A respite was granted on account of his health. The Venetian authorities were perhaps not over zealous in the matter;[1] Wagner was always personally popular with local officials, and there was no particular reason why they should desire to please Saxony. The Saxon Government then, in reply to his appeal, called upon him to return to Saxony and present himself for trial. It was a practical certainty that even in the event of an adverse judgment he would be pardoned by the King; but the weak state of his health would have made it impossible to endure the strain involved in undergoing a trial.

Another course was suggested by Eduard Devrient, at the instance of the Grand Duke of Baden. It was proposed that after completing his *Tristan* he should send the score to Karlsruhe for performance; the Grand Duke would then invite him to stay in Baden as his guest while superintending the rehearsals, taking all the responsibility upon himself. The Saxon Government, if it ever heard of what was going on, might make diplomatic representations, but they would take some time to consider, and before they were disposed of Wagner would have left. Rightly did he describe the proposal as "most princely."

Lohengrin, which its composer had never heard, was making its way everywhere in Germany. In Vienna its success was great and enduring; in Berlin, to the astonishment of von Hülsen, the house was sold out for six representations in advance. As for his future residence, he was now more inclined than before to listen to Liszt's advice and make it in Paris, provided that he could secure a position there, with the means of supporting himself. Before all he had to finish *Tristan*, and to find a suitable place where he could work. He chose Lucerne, where he arrived at the end of March, having bidden good-bye to Karl Ritter, who went off on other paths and

[1] Max Koch points out that the *Statthalter* who befriended Wagner on this occasion was the Archduke Maximilian, who some years later came to a tragic end in Mexico.

never saw him again.[1] In Lucerne he took rooms in the Schweitzerhof, and there resumed his works; on August 8th *Tristan* was completed, and the third act was sent off to Breitkopf und Härtel to be printed. Shortly before it was finished he was cheered by a visit, lasting some weeks, from Felix Draesecke, a young pupil of Liszt, and the latest acquisition of the Weimar School. He determined to go to Paris. That haughty spirit was now tamed; his genial defiance of life had given way to necessity. For him to live at all two things were necessary: his return to Germany, and a settlement of his finances. Nothing had come of the Karlsruhe scheme for *Tristan;* the score was pronounced impossible. He had for some time been negotiating with the Director of the *Théâtre lyrique* for the production of *Rienzi* or *Tannhäuser* in Paris, and was still treating with Breitkopf und Härtel for the publication of the score of the *Ring*, but nothing resulted. He went to Paris deliberately with the object of getting his works performed. To provide him with the needful funds for the move Otto Wesendonk, who had with his wife paid him several visits in Lucerne, purchased the score of the *Ring*, paying for it, we are told, 24,000 francs (£960).

He reached Paris on September 16th. Before going there he received very tempting offers from America for the following year to conduct concerts in New York, and was strongly inclined to accept one of them provided the terms were made sufficiently attractive. It does not seem that he had any very definite plans as to what he intended to do in Paris, but he hoped that Minna, who was not very happily situated in Dresden, would soon join him there. Never doubting that he was about to settle in affluence for the rest of his life, and, according to his usual habit, anticipating what he conceived to be a certainty, he rented a house, Rue Newton No. 16, in the neighbourhood of the Champs Élysées, at a yearly rental of 4,000 francs (£160). He had to pay the rent for three years

[1] Twenty years later Ritter published a treatise on the Theory of Tragedy. Wagner sought him when in Venice in 1882, but without success.

in advance, and as the house had fallen into disrepair and the landlord refused to do anything to make it habitable, the whole expense of the repairs fell upon him. The furniture was to be sent from Switzerland, and when all was ready for her reception Minna would join him, bringing with her from Germany a lady whom she was to engage as her companion. She was not to trouble herself about the management of the house; the companion would relieve her of all such duties, would read to her, go out with her and keep her amused, while she rested, presiding over the household as Lady Bountiful, with no care for anything except her own comfort and health. For himself he engaged a valet in livery, specially sent from Switzerland. Minna's daughter, Natalie, now well over thirty, was still dependent upon them, but was unable to get on with her mother. It was decided that she should be educated to earn her living as a governess, Wagner bearing the expenses of her training. Should she ever wish to marry he promised her a yearly income of 200 thalers (£30) for her life.[1] However we may condemn his fantastic schemes by the light of after events, we must bear in mind the boundless confidence which he had in the eventual success of his works when once he had obtained for them an adequate hearing—a confidence for which the results already achieved in Germany afforded some justification, and which the future amply confirmed. He knew that the time must come when his work would meet with recognition and his labours would be rewarded. All Paris was talking of *Tannhäuser*, and he had some reason for thinking that the long-deferred day of his deliverance was at hand. A more prudent man would have waited. Wagner was not prudent, but the disasters which followed were the result rather of unprecedented ill-luck than of his sanguine improvidence. His links with the past were gradually breaking. Two associates of his early struggles died within a few days of each other: Ludwig Spohr towards the end of October, Fischer early in November. Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient died early in the

[1] She seems eventually to have married a man named Bilz. She died in Dresden in 1900.

following year. Of the two former he wrote a kindly notice for publication in a Dresden paper.[1] Most of his Paris friends were away when he arrived. Through von Bülow he came to know a M. de Gasperini, a doctor, who although young had retired from practice. By him he was introduced to Léon Leroy, a teacher of music; both were warm admirers of his works. His first step was to seek out the Director of the *Théâtre Lyrique*, M. Carvalho, who had long been anxious to give *Tannhäuser*, and had been in correspondence with him ever since his last visit to Paris. A young theatrical journalist named de Charnal had announced himself to make the translation, but was unsuccessful. Leroy suggested that the translation should be entrusted to Roger, the famous tenor, who had recently been compelled to retire from the stage owing to the loss of his right arm by a gun accident, and was then living on his estate a little way out of Paris. He was a highly cultured musician, perfectly familiar with the German language, and had already gained some practice in translating. He seemed to be just the man for the occasion, and Wagner visited him in his country residence. He entered readily into the project and sang a few fragments which he had translated. But his accident had unnerved him for serious work, and it was put aside.

Carvalho, who a year before had been pressing for an immediate performance of *Tannhäuser*, now wished for delay. His theatre was about to be pulled down to make room for a new street, and was to be rebuilt, greatly improved, on another site; he wished to inaugurate the new building when it was ready with *Tannhäuser*. But Wagner could not afford to wait; all his funds were gone. On October 21st he entered his new home, where a few weeks later by was joined by his wife. Minna, when she arrived in the middle of November with her dog and cockatoo, by no means shared his sanguine hopes. He had spoken of an immediate income of 60,000 francs (£2,400). She laughed his liveried servant to scorn, and was anything but pleased with the companion whom he had engaged for her

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, v. 105.

in Paris. It was not long before both these ornamental adjuncts to their establishment had to be sent away.

Wagner's intention was to open his campaign in Paris with three grand orchestral and choral concerts devoted to selections from his works. Belloni, who was still in Paris, served him zealously with advice and help. The prices asked for the use of a hall being prohibitive—4,000 francs were asked for one night!—by the advice of Belloni and Gasperini he petitioned the Emperor to allow him the use of the Imperial Opera-house free of charge. His request seems to have aroused a political dispute amongst the higher personages of the Court, the Private Secretary, Mocquard, being in favour of the foreigner, and the Minister, Fould, against him. Receiving no reply, Wagner began negotiations with the lessee of the *Théâtre Italien*. No sooner was the contract signed than, too late, the desired permission for the Opera-house was granted. The training of the choruses was undertaken by von Bülow, who came expressly to Paris for the purpose, "more concerned for my interests than for his own appearance as a virtuoso," as Wagner testifies. Having now spent every penny of his money in hand he applied first to Breitkopf und Härtel for a loan, then to Tichatschek, representing, as he doubtless believed, that his position was secured for the next year. He was unexpectedly set up in funds from another source. Franz Schott, head of the firm Schotts Söhne in Mainz, wrote asking Wagner to allow him to publish one of his works. He had been moved to this step by Heinrich Esser, the conductor of the Imperial opera at Vienna, who was not an admirer of Wagner's music, but recognised its commercial value. The only work available was *Rheingold*, the score of which had, as we have seen, been sold with the rest of the *Nibelungen* to Wesendonk and had to be redeemed. Wesendonk at once agreed, and Wagner offered it to Schott, promising him at the same time the refusal of the other numbers of the *Ring* when they were ready. Thus the firm Schotts Söhne became the publishers of the *Ring*. The sum paid for the copyright of *Rheingold*—10,000 francs—was generous as the prospects then were. Wagner was in

business matters a hard bargainer and showed great skill in gaining his end.

Of his three concerts the tale is soon told. They took place on January 25th, February 1st and 8th. At the first concert all the élite of Paris were present; every place was sold. The Court was represented by Maréchal Magnan; of musicians Meyerbeer, Berlioz, Gounod, Gevaert and many more were present. Others who were probably there, since they are known to have belonged to Wagner's circle in Paris, were Champfleury, Ch. Baudelaire, Gustave Doré, Jules Ferry, St. Heller, Em. Ollivier, Fréd. Villot, the Keeper of the Art-treasures at the Louvre. Wagner had obstinately refused to distribute free tickets to the representatives of the press; they were, nevertheless, present in force; "it was like the building of the Tower of Babel, or the sessions of the National Convention," one of them reported. The enthusiasm was unbounded. Wagner relates how after the first few bars of the *Tannhäuser* March the whole audience, who had been misled into the belief that he eschewed melody, burst into delighted applause. The net financial loss was over 5,000 francs. At the second concert the theatre had to be filled by means of free tickets; the third it was proposed to cancel, but a wealthy merchant stepped in and guaranteed the expenses. It was given with a similar result. Glasenapp states the total loss on the three concerts to have been 11,000 francs.

The disaster was the work of the press, which had employed every device of calumny and ridicule to ruin the undertaking. Every day the papers entertained their readers with lampoons, tit-bits of gossip and malicious anecdotes against the foreigner. Rossini, now an old man, was living in Paris with his wife, having long ago retired from public life, the centre of a large circle of admirers for whom he kept open house. In accordance with the regular practice of the press, then, as now, of sowing enmity between rival artists Rossini was brought into the arena to be pitted against Wagner. Cheap witticisms, bon-mots at Wagner's expense were fathered upon the Italian *maestro* and regularly published. Wagner took little notice; he was

well accustomed to the calumnies of journalists, and that the man whom he had once ridiculed so mercilessly should indulge in witticisms at his expense was not in itself surprising. When at last there appeared in one of the papers a very dignified protest from the *maestro* against the abuse of his name, repudiating the sayings attributed to him, and adding that he knew little of Wagner's compositions, and would never seek to throw ridicule upon a composer who was endeavouring to widen the field of art, Wagner, surprised and delighted, determined to go and see Rossini. He was introduced by E. Michotte, a long-standing friend of the *maestro*. His account of the conversation, published nearly half a century later from notes taken at the time,[1] is one of the most interesting documents of the Wagner literature that we possess. While professing the utmost respect for Wagner's ideals and wishes for his success, Rossini nevertheless doubted whether such a reform as he contemplated could be accomplished without involving the destruction of melody. He showed no little dialectical skill in developing his argument, and Wagner, whose profound knowledge of musical literature gave him a great advantage, no less skill in defending his position. They parted on the most cordial terms of mutual esteem.

The attitude of Berlioz has been grossly misrepresented. He has been described as devoured with jealousy of Wagner's fame, and has been held up to obloquy for having, as is asserted, adopted a hostile attitude. His words, "Je lève la main et je le jure: *Non credo!*" have been quoted again and again, torn from their context, as if they were intended to refer to Wagner. His article is accessible in any of our national libraries to anyone who may wish to consult it.[2] The words do not apply to Wagner at all, but to certain absurd doctrines which no man ever held, but which had been attributed to him by his enemies—these are what Berlioz swears he does not

[1] E. Michotte, *La Visite de R. Wagner à Rossini*, Librairie Fischbacher, Paris, 1906.

[2] *Journal des Débats* of February 9th, 1860. It is reproduced in his collected works, A travers Chants, No. xxiv.

believe. Of Wagner's endeavours to reform the opera he speaks with enthusiastic praise, pouring scorn upon his opponents and detractors. Of the three earlier overtures heard at the concert he shows full appreciation; certain criticisms which he passes are perfectly sound; he is speaking on a subject of which he is a master, and they need not offend the most extreme Wagnerite. Especially to *Lohengrin* he gives unstinted praise. The *Tristan* prelude he frankly admits that he does not understand, and so abstains from criticising it. Only he is perplexed about Wagner's "system." As he knew no German, and cannot therefore have read Wagner's writings, he can only have gained his notions from the current gossip of Paris. No doubt he honestly believed that Wagner had a system; he did not understand it, and his unpardonable offence is that instead of being content with half understanding he had the courage to reserve his judgment. Wagner replied to his article in a friendly letter, in which he endeavours to clear his mind about the "école de l'avenir." It is published in his collected works.[1]

Wagner's original plan to arrange a cycle of all his works, including *Tristan*, with a company brought expressly for the purpose from Germany, was now, of course, relinquished. In Paris, during the Empire, public opinion was very much guided by the attitude of the Court, and many persons in high positions, who were able to give him effective aid, were deeply impressed by what they had heard. Through Magnan Wagner and his art became a subject of lively discussion at the Tuileries. The Prussian Ambassador, Count Pourtalès was his strong supporter, but above all it was the Countess Metternich, the wife of the Austrian Ambassador, who, with her enthusiastic propaganda for *Tannhäuser*, which she had heard in Dresden, succeeded in rousing the interest of the Emperor. She was a lady of the finest taste in art, and from her intimate friendship with the Empress Eugénie had great influence. Expressly as a favour to her the Emperor commanded *Tannhäuser* to be put into rehearsal at the *Grand Opéra*.

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, vii. 82.

On March 24th and 29th the Paris concerts were repeated in Brussels, whither Wagner was specially invited to conduct. Hopes had been held out to him of a considerable financial success, but they were not realised. He earned nothing. Otherwise the concerts were a success; they helped to spread his name in Belgium, and the visit brought him new artistic connections, among whom must be named Staatsrath Klindworth, a diplomatic agent with extensive connections, apparently not related, or only very distantly, to his namesake Karl Klindworth the pianist. By the end of the month he was back in Paris. Malwide von Meysenbug, whom he here met again, gives a glowing description of his Wednesday afternoon receptions, frequented by many of the élite of Parisian society. Selections from his works were given, Karl Klindworth, who had come over from London, playing the pianoforte. Second only to him as an executant was Camille Saint-Säens, who then held the post of organist at the Madeleine; Wagner speaks especially of his astounding memory. He knew all the scores, including *Tristan*, by heart so perfectly that he could reproduce the minutest details as if the score were before him. At one of these receptions Madame Viardot-Garcia was present and sang the part of "Isolde" *a prima vista*. When told that it had been refused in Karlsruhe on the ground that the part was impossible she asked with some naïveté, "Are then German singers not musical?"

Wagner's financial embarrassments were now more crushing than ever before. That the brilliant success which he promised himself from the production of *Tannhäuser* would put everything right he had no doubt whatever, but the question was how to live during the months which must elapse on its preparation. He had burdened himself with an expensive house, which had to be maintained. Three years' rent had been paid in advance, and he now received notice from the municipal authorities that to make room for alterations in the street the house was to be pulled down in the following October, that is to say just when his time and attention would be fully occupied with the preparations for *Tannhäuser*.

Added to all this was the worry and expense of unsuccessful legal proceedings to recover his advance from the landlord. A movement was set on foot by Malwide von Meysenbug to collect by subscription among his admirers a sum sufficient to reimburse him for the losses on his concerts, but she was incautious enough to allow her plan to become known. Wagner read of it in the newspapers and indignantly refused to accept anything. He received, however, 3,000 francs from an English lady. The generous Wesendonk allowed him to retain the whole of the money which Schott had paid him for *Rheingold*. We remember the Countess Kalergis, whom he had only once met since she first saw him in Dresden. She was now in Paris, and on hearing of the straits that he was in she sent him a donation of 10,000 francs. Notwithstanding her exalted rank and high connections she was not rich, and her deed was kept secret from all but Liszt. This contribution enabled him to tide over the moment. He gave private performances for her of parts of *Tristan*, with Klindworth, Madame Viardot and Niemann, only Berlioz being present beside themselves. She was much impressed, but not altogether favourably; her criticism reminds us of Semper's; she found "Eine allzugrosse Vertiefung in den Gegenstand. *Tristan et Isolde* est tout bonnement impossible; c'est une abstraction curieuse à l'étude et offrant des beautés dont on pourrait dégager une pensée saine, mais qui sera, comme œuvre dramatique, repoussée par tous les publics de l'univers."

When the arrangements for the forthcoming representation of *Tannhäuser* came to be discussed with the Director, Alphonse Royer, various difficulties at once arose. A ballet in the second act was considered indispensable. Many of the fashionable frequenters of the *Grand Opéra* cared for nothing else, and in this case, where so much depended upon a signal success, it was important that no risks should be run. There was obviously no place for a ballet in the second act without breaking the action and introducing an absurdity, and Wagner threatened to withdraw the work if this was insisted upon. In the first act he expressed his willingness to insert a ballet

after the overture, where a dance of nymphs and satyrs would form a very suitable introduction to the scene in the Venusberg. To this, however, the Director demurred, urging that it would be missed by the most important section of the audience, the members of the fashionable Jockey Club, who generally did not arrive before the second act. For a time there was a dead-lock, but eventually his proposal was accepted. At the same time he undertook a revision of the opera, re-writing especially the Venus scene in the first act to French words. To initiate the French public into the character of his art he had all his dramatic works, from *Der Holländer* to *Tristan*, translated into French prose by M. Challemel-Lacour, adding a preface in the form of a letter to M. Villot, now included in his collected works under the title *Zukunftsmusik*.[1] Starting from the hypothesis that the life-process of the artist is from the unconscious to the conscious, he sketches the development of his art; entirely in the vein of Socrates he maintains that "the productive impulse of the artist is unconscious, instinctive."[2] In the German this impulse took an ideal form, which could never remain satisfied with the opera. Beethoven after one attempt turned away from the opera to the symphony. He next proceeds to develop his doctrine of the union of the arts:

> I had to recognize that, however genius might amplify their scope, the individual arts, developed in isolation, could only degenerate into falsehood and artificiality if ever they attempted to take the place of the universal art, which is only attainable by their united co-operation. The doctrines of the best art-critics, especially the researches of Lessing into the limits of poetry and painting, led me to the conviction that each single branch of art, striving for expansion, reaches a limit which it cannot transgress without the risk of becoming unintelligible, or even fantastic and absurd. At this point each art seems to show a tendency to join hands with another art akin to itself and at the same time possessing the potentiality of further progress. . . . Thus

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, vii. 87.

[2] *Ges. Schr.*, vii. 88. *c.f.* Plato, *Apol.*, 22 B.C. ὅτι οὐ σοφίᾳ ποιοῖεν ἃ ποιοῖεν ἀλλὰ φύσει τινὶ καὶ ἐνθουσιάζοντες; the whole passage is translated above in Chap. XI.

> passing naturally to the conscious realisation of the ideal which had arisen unconsciously in my mind, I conceived an art in which all the single arts should be united, each being perfected through such union.[1]

After speaking of the extraordinary popularity of music in modern times as showing that it meets a profound inner necessity of mankind, he continues :

> The language of music, being unintelligible by the canons of logic, must contain some element more appropriate to its intelligibility than they can supply. In view of this undeniable fact only two ways of development are open to poetry in the future. Either it must pass entirely into the realm of abstraction and become philosophy ; or it must coalesce with music—that is to say, with that music of which the infinite capabilities have been revealed to us in the symphonies of Beethoven.

In May, before the preparations had been definitely taken in hand for *Tannhäuser*, an invitation reached Wagner from St. Petersburg to give the opera there under the patronage of the Emperor. The message was brought by a general officer in uniform, specially deputed by the Tsar. Wagner was to remain the winter in the capital, directing several concerts in addition to his opera, and to receive 50,000 francs as his remuneration. He refused the offer, probably thinking that a success in Paris was of more importance than one in St. Petersburg. His financial position had for the moment been eased by the aid of a wealthy banker named Erlanger, who from purely disinterested motives undertook to finance him in Paris. The translation was done under Wagner's own eye in his room. It was at first entrusted to Edmond Roche, a custom-house official whose acquaintance Wagner had made when clearing his furniture from Switzerland ; he knew German, and the versification was begun by a singer named Lindau ; on his failure it was transferred to the far more skilful hands of a young advocate who held the post of record-keeper at the opera, named Triunet, but better known by his *nom de*

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, vii. 100.

plume, Charles Nuitter. Lindau subsequently sued Wagner to have his name inserted with the others on the theatrical programme; it was decided that the credit of the translation belonged to Nuitter alone, but as he was too modest to allow his name to be publicly associated with that of Wagner it appeared anonymously.

All the resources of the Académie Impériale were at his disposal; expense was not considered. The scenic decorations were of the most sumptuous kind, from the first house in Paris, Desplechin, who had supplied the scenery for Dresden in 1845. The composer's smallest wishes were carried out at once without question. He could choose his singers, arrange his rehearsals just as he pleased, with no other thought than to attain the utmost perfection of the performance. For the costumes and decorations Heine's original drawings were obtained from Dresden. For the title-rôle Niemann was engaged from Hanover for twelve months on a salary of 6,000 francs a month. A similar salary was paid to Madame Tedesco ("Venus"), 3,000 to Morelli ("Wolfram"), and so on for the rest. The composer was to have 500 francs for each performance, to be shared equally between him and the translator. While busy with the translation in the summer of 1860 he received a notification from the Saxon Ambassador in Paris, von Seebach, that the Saxon Government had at last yielded to the wish of so many high personages for his amnesty in so far as to accord permission for him to enter any state of Germany except Saxony. It seems to have been the intercession of the Graf Pourtalès and of the Princess of Prussia that brought about the decision. Wagner could not resist the impulse at once to visit his Fatherland. He went to Frankfort, and thence, on a hint from von Seebach, to Baden-Baden, where the Princess of Prussia was on a visit, and was able to express to her personally his gratitude for her continued interest in him. Germany, he writes to Liszt, after so many years of absence, did not impress him favourably. The concession, partial though it was, was valuable because it made the production of *Tristan* in Germany possible. He first thought

of producing it in Hanover, where Niemann assured him that the King would give him every facility.

It was during the preparations for *Tannhäuser* that he used frequently to meet Auber at a café, and sat conversing with him till late into the night. Auber took the keenest interest in *Tannhäuser*, rubbed his hands with delight and predicted a prodigious success on hearing Wagner's description. After his death ten years later Wagner wrote his reminiscences. He always had a high opinion of Auber, and had long before scandalised the æsthetes of Paris by placing him above Rossini. In the later memoir he defines very sympathetically and with masterly critical judgment his artistic character, especially as exhibited in *La Muette*.[1]

Liszt was still in Weimar, but not carrying on regular official duties. He was thoroughly unnerved and broken by the events of the preceding year, and believed his death to be imminent. For a moment Wagner's ill-timed querulousness had been too much even for his sublime patience, but the cloud soon passed away. Early in 1860 the obstacles to his marriage with Princess Wittgenstein seemed to have been removed by a decree of the Russian Consistorium, but objections were raised on ecclesiastical grounds by the Bishop of Fulda to the remarriage of a divorcee. In May of that year the Princess travelled to Rome, threw herself at the feet of the Pope (Pius IX.) and wrung from him a dispensation. But she had reckoned without the Cardinals; large financial interests were at stake, her Russian estates being still under sequestration, and the affair became involved in endless intrigue. In the following year Liszt went to Rome to be married to her. All was ready for the ceremony to take place on his fiftieth birthday, October 22nd, at six in the morning. Late in the previous night a message arrived from the Pope forbidding the marriage. They were never united. Thus far it was necessary to anticipate to explain how it came that Liszt had no share in the *Tannhäuser* performances in Paris, where Wagner was eagerly expecting his arrival.

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, ix. 42.

Of the events connected with the production we have very full accounts by Wagner himself, by Charles Nuitter in the *Bayreuther Festblätter* for 1884 and by others.[1] The rehearsals began in the latter part of September and continued throughout the winter. There were altogether 164. To convey an idea of the way in which an important work was prepared in Paris under the Second Empire I give a few details from Nuitter:

73 piano rehearsals from September 24th to March 16th, all under Wagner's personal direction except nine when he was ill. They were attended by the conductor and the stage-manager.
45 choral rehearsals from October 6th to the end of February.
27 stage rehearsals without orchestra, from January 9th to March 12th, all except three directed by Wagner.
4 scenic rehearsals in February.
9 orchestral rehearsals in January and February.
4 general rehearsals.
2 dress rehearsals.

These, of course, do not include the numberless private rehearsals which he held with individual singers in his rooms. The parts were assigned as follows:

Tannhäuser	Niemann
Wolfram	Morelli
Landgrave	Cazaux
Walter	Aimez
Heinrich der Schreiber	König
Reinmar von Zweter	Freret
Venus	Madame Tedesco
Elisabeth	Mademoiselle Sax
Young Shepherd	Mademoiselle Reboux

Wagner himself bears testimony to the minute care which was bestowed upon every detail of the performance, and to the good-will and artistic intelligence with which they all carried out their respective parts. Where in Germany, he asks,

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, vii. 138; *Mein Leben*, ii. 739–753; von Meysenbug, *Memoiren einer Idealistin*. The last is reproduced in the letters to Otto Wesendonk, pp. 73 *sqq.*

is there a theatre which would bestow such pains on the preparation of a work? At the first orchestral rehearsal, after the Septet which concludes the first act, the players, every one of whom was a musician of the first rank, broke as one man into tumultuous applause and cheers. Only one of the persons engaged incurred his censure, but he was, unfortunately, the most important of all, the conductor, Louis Dietsch, the very man to whom twenty years before the composition of his *Holländer* libretto had been entrusted. His practice was to leave the executants to play as they thought fit and to follow them with his bâton. Wagner petitioned to be allowed to conduct the last rehearsal and the first three performances, but this could not be allowed. He therefore at the rehearsals took up a position on the stage just in front of the *Kapellmeister*, conducting with hands and feet, "making the floor resound terribly, amid clouds of dust."[1] He refused bluntly to have any dealings with the official *claque*, the paid body of applauders held to be necessary for a performance in Paris, thus offending a party which was very powerful for mischief.

As the time for the representation drew near ominous rumours arose in the press. The artists, wearied with over-rehearsing, became disheartened, fearing a catastrophe. Another endeavour was made by Count Metternich and the French Minister, Comte Walewski, to overcome Wagner's objections to a ballet in the second act. He was offered his choice of the most famous *danseuses* of Europe; they should be specially sent for from London or St. Petersburg, or from wherever he would. He wished to withdraw his opera, but that was out of the question after he had once given it over for representation. This and many other indications brought home to him the fundamental divergence between himself and the Parisians. With all the winning and sterling qualities which endear the French to every foreigner the Parisian public —at least the opera-going public—could not be brought to understand the earnestness and the selflessness of the German.

[1] Nuitter in *Bayreuther Festblätter*, 1884.

What they wanted was a great success for the glory of the Parisian *Académie*, while Wagner was seeking the triumph of an artistic idea. In all that great community there was really only one whose heart could beat with his, and he was a German—Hans von Bülow.

The first performance took place on March 13th. All went well until after the young shepherd's song, when strange noises were heard. Wagner thought it was the Emperor arriving, but the practised ear of the Director, Royer, in whose box he was sitting, at once detected the "Jockeys." The disturbances continued through the second act till the end of the third, the protests of the well-disposed who wished to hear the work only adding to the tumult. The Countess Metternich, who from the first had taken the deepest interest in the production and had attended the rehearsals, led off some applause, which was taken up by the rest of the house. Against her was the Countess Walewski. What made the conduct of the "Jockeys" more than ever unseemly was the fact that the performance was under the special protection of the Emperor, who was himself present and applauding. When the curtain fell after the third act there was a demonstration in favour of the composer so emphatic that all opposition was crushed. The disturbers had failed in their purpose of stopping the performance; it was a battle, and Wagner held the field.

For the second representation on March 18th several cuts were agreed to. It began well; there was no interruption during the first act, and the impression on the audience was decidedly favourable. The Emperor and the Empress were both present and led the applause, which was loud and prolonged. By the middle of the second act, however, the "Jockeys" began to arrive, bringing with them hunting whistles which they had bought on their way to the theatre. The exasperated public, which wanted to hear the music, was now in a very dangerous mood, and cries of "A la porte les Jockeys" began to be heard from various parts of the house. Niemann himself from the stage, in rage and disgust, threw his pilgrim's hat at the audience. The authorities were powerless, not daring to offend

the aristocratic ruffians who were responsible for the scandal. They again failed, however, to stop the performance, which was continued to the end and was generally regarded as a victory for Wagner; never, it was said, had the friendly section of the public battled with such determination for the success of a new opera; the opposition had only succeeded in advertising the work; all Paris was flocking to hear it, and if he only persevered it was certain to bring in a large financial profit. Wagner himself, however, was thoroughly disheartened. He again wished to withdraw the work, and only agreed to a third representation on condition of its being on Sunday "hors abonnement," when the regular subscribers would not be present. It was fixed for the 24th. He withdrew himself entirely, and left it to be cut and mutilated at discretion. But the "Jockeys" were not to be baulked in this way; they bought tickets and were present in force with their whistles, thus proving that their hostility was not due to dislike of the opera, but to other causes. The uproar far exceeded that of the previous nights. The house was strongly guarded by the police for the protection of the "Jockeys," who, it was expected, would be attacked by the infuriated public. It was "the high capital of Satan and his peers." The noise began with the overture and continued until the curtain dropped at the end, both sides shouting, yelling, hooting, until they were too hoarse to go on, and the "Jockeys" had the advantage with their whistles. More than once the performance was at a standstill for fully a quarter of an hour, but the executants held out valiantly, and it was continued somehow or other to the end. Neither Wagner nor his wife were present. At two in the morning Malwida von Meysenbug with a party of her friends went to his house to report the events of the evening, and found them quietly drinking tea together. On the next morning, with the assistance of Nuitter, he wrote a letter to the Director officially withdrawing his opera. The Director, Royer, remonstrated, pointing out that two more performances had been announced, that the demand for tickets had been greater than ever, and that he could not go back without

breaking faith with the public. Wagner was obdurate; he could not consent to the singers being subjected to further insult, and Royer himself had at last to recognise that the battle was lost. Thus ended one of the most scandalous episodes in the history of the stage.

The financial results of the three representations were by no means discouraging. The following figures are from Glasenapp and Nuitter:

Total expenses	about 250,000 francs.	
Receipts.—March 13th ..	7,491 fr. (incl. 2,770 fr. for subscriptions.	
,, March 18th ..	8,415 ,, (,, 2,750 ditto).	
,, March 24th ..	10,764 ,, (,, 230 ,,).	
Total receipts ..	.. 26,670 francs.	5,750 francs.

Had the performances been continued not only would the expenses in time have been covered, but there would have been a substantial profit.

The press, which had sedulously fomented the movement against *Tannhäuser*, was jubilant at its overthrow. Notwithstanding the favour which it enjoyed on its own merits as an opera with the more respectable members of the public, only two voices were heard in condemnation of the disgraceful scenes which had taken place. Jules Janin, the veteran critic of the *Journal des Débats*, proposed as coat of arms for the Jockey Club, "Un sifflet sur champ de gueules hurlantes, et pour exergue: *Asinus ad Lyram*." Charles Baudelaire expressed himself with equal vigour in a pamphlet. The demonstration was certainly in great part political; it was directed less against Wagner and his opera than against the representative of the hated Austria, his protector, Count Metternich, and so indirectly against the Emperor himself.

Berlioz did not write on *Tannhäuser*, but left the report to his collaborator, d'Ortigue.[1] By this time Wagner's

[1] *Journal des Débats*, March 23rd, 1861.

Zukunftsmusik was available in French, and he actually reproduced from it the words: "L'unique forme de la musique est la mélodie; sans la mélodie la musique ne peut pas mème être connue." But the "system" still spooks, and he is convinced that Wagner rejects melody in music. It is strange to note that the disturbances in the theatre are not even mentioned either here or elsewhere in the paper, probably from fear of offending the aristocratic rowdies.

The alterations which Wagner made in the score for the Paris representation may be described very briefly.[1] The overture, instead of ending with a repetition of the Pilgrims' Chorus, passes into a "ballet." The curtain rises, and the tumultuous scenes of the Venus mountain are enacted on the stage. Venus is reposing on a bank, heeding only Tannhäuser slumbering at her feet; she is attended by the three Graces. Wilder and wilder the orgies grow in a sort of Bacchanalian dance in imitation of those depicted on ancient Grecian vases. Shocked at their excesses, the Graces chase the rout away, rousing the slumbering Cupids to shoot at them with their arrows. Then, turning to Venus, they tell her of their victory over the wild passions which have degraded her kingdom, and to soothe her present visions, first of Europa and the bull, then of Leda and the swan, illustrated by a dance, the grace and sweetness of which express the universal dominion of love over all living beings. The song of the sirens is heard from the distance and the scene continues as before. The music of the first scene has been partly recomposed; especially in the part of Venus the experience which he has gained from the chromatic writing of *Tristan* is very noticeable. In Tannhäuser's song the climax D♭—D—E♭ is maintained. Opinions differ as to which version is the better. Weissheimer, a good musician, though somewhat opinionated, dislikes the Venus scene in the Paris version on musical grounds. He remarks wittily that it begins like *Tristan* gone mad and ends with the tones of *Rienzi*. Wagner himself thought that Venus

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, xi. 414.

had been shabbily treated in Dresden, and preferred the Paris version :

> The Court of Venus was clearly the weak point of my work. I had to manage without a good ballet, and so for the time to content myself with a few rough strokes of the brush, whereby much was spoiled. The impression of the Venusberg remained dull and shadowy ; the essential background on which the awful tragedy is laid was lost. All the later decisive reminiscences and admonitions calculated to awaken a thrill of awe—whereby alone the action becomes clear—lost their force and meaning ; there was neither fear nor embarrassment. I now realise that I was then unequal to the task of composing *Tannhäuser*. It needed a far greater mastery, such as I have only now acquired after having composed Isolde's beatific farewell. . . . One becomes almighty when one has learned to play with the world.[1]

In general it may be said that the earlier Venus has the charm of greater simplicity, in the later she is more resplendent with jewellery.

Other alterations made for Paris have already been noticed. In Act II. the tournament scene is shortened by the omission of Walther's song. In the great finale of that act Tannhäuser's words, " Zum Heil den Sundigen zu führen . . . " are more appropriately assigned to a solo.[2]

[1] *Briefe an Minna Wesendonk*, April 10th, 1860.

[2] See Chapter XII.

CHAPTER XX

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

> Issu sans doute d'un vieux mythe ancestral, conçu peut-être chez les Pictes, en tout cas chez les Celtes, et chez les Celtes mêmes déjà largement pénétré d'influences antiques et orientales, renouvelé chez les Bretons d'Armorique, adopté par les Anglo-Saxons avec la musique qui l'accompagnait, avidement accueilli par les Normands qui conquirent l'Angleterre et bientôt par les Français de France. . . .—*Gaston Paris.*

WAGNER'S *Tristan und Isolde* has sometimes been described as a tragedy based on Schopenhauer's philosophy. If this is intended to mean that it is concerned with the negation of will, or any other doctrine of the great exponent of pessimism, it rests on a misunderstanding. No work of art can issue from a philosophic conception. *Death*, which the lovers are seeking, is not with Schopenhauer, or with the Buddhist school of thought which he represents, the negation of will; it only gives rise to endless re-births. Tristan and Isolde are very far from such negation.

There is, however, another sense in which the tragedy is permeated with the spirit of Schopenhauer, namely in its outlook upon life. It was from Schopenhauer that Wagner learned the intimate relation subsisting between love and death—well known to Indian thought, and prominent in medieval German mysticism:

> Die Lieb' ist wie der Tod:
> Sie tötet meine Sinnen.
> Sie brichet mir das Herz
> Und führt den Geist von hinnen.[1]

[1] Angelus Silesius, *Cher. Wandersmann*, iv. 29.

That knowledge is intuitive, learned by insight, not by reason. An intuition, being always true, is a legitimate subject of art, whereas a discursive doctrine, such as Schopenhauer's pessimism, is a mere opinion, varies with individuals, and belongs to the realm of doubt and uncertainty, which are foreign to art.

It is now definitely established that the legend of Tristan and Isolde originated among the Celtic peoples of the British Isles. The names of the hero and of some of the localities are Pictish. At some time, not known, the story was brought to Wales; we meet with it in the Welsh Triads and in the Black Book of Carmarthen, both of which, although of later date, embody very early tradition. In these *Trostan* or *Drostan mab Tallorc* figures as a redoubtable swineherd, *i.e.* like Eumaeus, keeper of the royal property, in the service of King Marc. In Wales the story met with Irish elements, and was carried from Cornwall to Brittany, where it was taken up by Norman-Breton poets, who brought it back to England at the Conquest. By about the middle or latter half of the twelfth century it had become very popular, and from that time onwards spread throughout Europe. It was told by poets in prose and verse in many languages. There are two main currents, represented respectively by *Bérox* or *Bérous*, and by *Thomas*, both Anglo-Normans. Only fragments have reached us.[1] The versions with which we are concerned are derived from the second of these two sources, Thomas. They are:

1.—A Norwegian prose translation made by a monk named Robert at the command of King Hakon V in 1226.[2]

2.—An unfinished German poem by Gottfried von Strassburg, made in the early part of the thirteenth century.[3]

[1] The fragments have been collected and edited for the *Société des anciens textes français*, those of Bérous by Ernest Muret in 1903, those of Thomas by Joseph Bédier in 1902–5. The second volume of Bédier's work contains a most exhaustive account of the many versions of the legend, with genealogies of the various MSS.

[2] Edited with a German translation by Eugen Kölbing.

[3] German translations by Simrock, W. Hertz, and in Reclam by W. Pannier.

3.—*Sir Tristrem*, a poem composed in the North of England between 1294 and 1330.[1] This is the version which has been reproduced by Sir W. Scott from a MS. in the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, and wrongly attributed by him to Thomas of Ercildoune.

The legend spread far beyond the confines of Europe. Towards the beginning of the last century it was found in Afghanistan by Mountstuart Elphinstone. Tristan is there called Âdam, Isolde Durkhânî. They belonged to hostile clans, and she was married to one of her own clan, but she loved Âdam:

> Doorkhauni's only pleasure, during the long intervals of her lover's visits, was to retire to a garden, and to cultivate two flowers, one of which she named after herself, and the other after the object of her affection. On the day of the ambuscade she was watching her flowers, when she observed that of Audam languish from sympathy with his recent misfortune; and before she recovered from her surprise she was accosted by her husband, who approached her with a drawn sword, and boasted that it was wet with the blood of Audam. This trial was fatal to Doorkhaunee, who sunk to the ground, overwhelmed with grief and horror, and expired on the spot. The news was brought to Audam, who lay wounded near the scene of the ambuscade, and no sooner had he heard it than he called on his mistress's name and breathed his last. They were buried at a distance from each other; but their love prevailed even in death, and their bodies were found to have met in one grave. Two trees sprung from their remains and mingled their branches over the tomb.[2]

Wagner's immediate source, in so far as he can be said to have had any, is the epic of Gottfried von Strassburg. But in reality Wagner's tragedy has very little more in common with the poem of Gottfried than the names and the previous history of the lovers before the drama opens. We know what his own opinion was of his medieval "sources" from a letter to Mathilde Wesendonk.[3] He condemns Wolfram and Gottfried

[1] Edited by MacNeill for the Scottish Text Society.

[2] M. Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Cabul*, i. 245.

[3] Letter to Mathilde Wesendonk of May 30th, 1859.

as well as other poets of their time in the severest terms: "The barbaric confusion of the time, hovering between ancient Christianity and modern political economy, could accomplish nothing; for depth it offered jejune extravagances." Those who have lived themselves into the spirit of the genuine legend, he says, cannot fail to be repelled by the incompetence of the poets. The interest of Gottfried's epic lies entirely in the tricks of two love-sick boobies played upon a decrepit and jealous husband. But his poem is necessary to us, because it supplies the introductory history, regarding which Wagner leaves us almost entirely in the dark, although without it his own work is unintelligible. Isolde, with Wagner, is not the wife of King Marke; the question of marriage does not enter; we are in the region of myth, where priests and registrars have no place. No childish tricks are played upon the most royal of kings. Tristan is the very soul of chivalry and honour, but, blinded by the "false glamour of the day," he has committed an act of treachery against his uncle and benefactor, against the woman who loves him. It was from no selfish motive that he carried off Isolde to be the bride of King Marke; he deprived himself thereby of the succession, for the good of his people. She is the more volcanic character, in some ways the stronger—witness how Tristan cowers before her in the first act. She is dominated by the uncontrollable fire of her love and of her wrath; no consciousness of guilt hinders her from following her own free impulse. But the guilty Tristan is fully conscious; his love is as fierce as hers, but sullied with dishonour, which can only be expiated by death. *Only he has not the courage to depart while leaving her behind*, and the dramatic action consists externally in his endeavour to find out whether she will accompany him to "the dark realm of the night." Till then he cannot die.

That this aspect of the tragedy should have been hitherto entirely overlooked by the public and the critics, who seldom read the texts, is perhaps not surprising; but that a scholar of the calibre of Gaston Paris[1] should have discerned in Wagner's

[1] *Revue de Paris*, April 15th, 1894.

work nothing more than a glorification of illicit passion is past comprehension, for it reduces the whole drama to an absurdity, and the hero to the level of a medieval Pecksniff. What, on this view, is meant by his talk about *honour?* How are we to understand the "Day" and the "Night"? Why does Tristan in the end, when every obstacle to their union has been overcome, deliberately take his own life? Excess of emotion, says M. Paris. But excess of emotion that amounts to madness is not poetically interesting, and a man who talks about his "honour" while seducing the wife of his friend is only disgusting. It may be true, as M. Paris contends, that adultery is the only form of love admissible in poetry, and that *therefore* in a drama based upon such love death is the only *dénouement* possible. However this may be, it has no application to Wagner's tragedy. With him the interest does not, as with the medieval poets, lie in the variety of piquant situations induced by illicit love and its consequent dangers. Their love is not illicit; to Tristan she was bound by the holiest of ties long before ever she saw King Marke, to Marke by no tie at all; and the interest lies in the presentation of the fact that a love pure, single-minded and resolute cannot prosper amid the conventions of human life, and can only end in bodily death, and thus in its illustration of the mystic identity of both.

This view of the tragedy is in accordance with every word of the text, and is the only one which explains many cryptic passages. The text is obscure beyond comparison, but a close study of it by the light of the music will show that the motives are developed with a logical consistency, a psychological subtlety and truthfulness, a sublimity of conception, and withal a poetic lightness and grace absolutely without a parallel in the whole range of dramatic literature of any time. In no other work of Wagner is the plot, if only we can understand it, more clear and consistent. Heinrich Porges truly remarks that the events follow each other with the certainty of natural phenomena. Wagner himself speaks of the pains which he bestowed upon its composition:

> I am composing as if all my life I had nothing more to work upon. For that reason it will be more beautiful than anything that I ever made ; the smallest phrase has for me the significance of a whole act ; with such care am I composing it.

And again :

> You know that one of us looks neither to the right nor to the left, neither forwards nor backwards, that we are indifferent to time and to the world, and to all else than the discharge of what is within us.

I do not rely upon any single passage in support of the view which I have taken of the tragedy, but there is one which alone seems to me to be decisive. It is in the second act, immediately after the nocturne. At first sight the words seem to be without meaning—mere inarticulate ejaculations of fond lovers :

> *Isolde.*—Hark, beloved !
> *Tristan.*—Let me die !
> *Is.*—Envious watch !
> *Tr.*—Never to wake !

She does not quite understand.

> *Is.*—But the day must waken, Tristan ? [as if their love would end with the night].
> *Tr.*—Let the day yield to death !

She questions Tristan ; there follows the little conceit on the word " and," the symbol of *joining*, and his meaning begins to dawn upon her. The dialogue must be followed sentence by sentence. At last she grasps his intention, that their love is immortal, and *together* they join in the death-song :

> Then should we die, unsevered, for ever united, etc.

We see how the duet has grown organically out of the dramatic

situation. Now comes the decisive moment; the words just quoted are repeated, but *with the parts interchanged:*

> *Tristan* (smiling as he bends over her).[1]—Shall I hearken?
> *Isolde* (looking up to him in rapture).—Let me die!
> *Tr.* (more earnestly).—Must I wake?
> *Is.* (more moved).—Never to wake!
> *Tr.* (more urgently)—[Still do you say] must the day waken Tristan?
> *Is.* (inspired).—Let the day yield to death!

Why does she repeat his words? Why does he smile? Why does she look up to him "in rapture"? It is because she now understands him, and with his smile he tells her that he knows that she understands him. There is a vein of light banter in her replies, as if she would say, "Do you still dream of light and love? Do you think that I do not know too?"

These few lines contain the crisis of the tragedy; all is told in Tristan's most significant smile. Immediately afterwards Marke appears with his train, and Tristan boldly challenges Isolde to declare publicly her resolve. He may now die. For the second time (the first was when he drank with her the supposed poison) he tries to leave his life when he drops his sword before Melot. He again fails, and is only wounded. The third time, at the end of the third act, he is successful. Each time the act is voluntary and deliberate.

The extreme difficulty of the text will make it necessary to analyse it very fully. As my monograph on the tragedy has, owing to the failure of the publisher and the subsequent war, had no chance of being read I make no apology for reproducing most of what I there wrote. In general, the music is grouped around two motives, connected respectively with *love* and with *death* (see the Examples Nos. 14A, B, and 15A). Similarly the drama pivots on two great metaphors: the *Day*, the garish, inconstant day, in all its splendid radiance,

[1] The stage-directions, through the inconceivable negligence of the Editor, are omitted in the text of his collected works. They will be found in the orchestral score.

capturing the senses and perverting the mind from its own true self, the *Mâyâ* of the Vedânta philosophy, the enemy of love; and the *Night*, in which the senses are closed, and the mind withdraws into itself, Brahman, the home of immortal love, attaining its final consummation in Death.[1]

[1] Some further remarks on the interpretation of the tragedy will be found in my *Wagner's Tristan und Isolde*, London, 1912.

CHAPTER XXI

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE—ANALYSIS

PERSONS of the drama :

MARKE, King of Cornwall.
TRISTAN, his nephew and heir to the throne.
MELOT, Tristan's friend.
KURWENAL, Tristan's servant.
ISOLDE, a Princess of Ireland.
BRANGÄNE, her bower-maid.

Story there is little in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde.* The drama is best understood as a titanic symphony, to which the text is a commentary. As it is quite impossible to understand what is going on upon the stage from the representation alone, and as the printed text itself presents many difficulties even to those who are thoroughly familiar with the German language, a rather full summary of the action will, it is believed, be found useful.

Some introductory matter must first be told. Marke, King of Cornwall, has lately become involved in a war with the King of Ireland, whose General, Morold, has invaded the country to compel tribute. Tristan, King Marke's nephew, has defeated the enemy and killed Morold, but himself been wounded in the fight. His wound refusing to heal, he has sought the advice of the renowned Irish princess and medicine-woman, Isolde. She had been the betrothed bride of Morold, and in the dead man's head, sent back to Ireland in derision as " tribute " by the conqueror, she has found a splinter from the sword which slew him, and has kept it. While Tristan is lying sick under her care she notices a gap in his sword into

which the splinter fits, and she knows that he is the slayer of her lover. She approaches him with sword upraised to slay him; he looks up at her; their eyes meet; she lets the sword fall, and bids him begone and trouble her no more. Tristan returns to Cornwall cured. His uncle is childless, and wishes to leave the kingdom to Tristan when he dies. But there are cabals in the State; a party has been formed under Tristan's friend Melot to induce King Marke to marry and beget an heir to the throne. Tristan joins them, and with great difficulty persuades his uncle to despatch him to Ireland and bring the Princess Isolde to be Marke's bride. The curtain rises when they are on board the ship on the voyage to Cornwall, just approaching the land.

For the character of the prelude I will quote the words of Heinrich Porges:[1]

> The introduction to *Tristan* is a part of the drama itself. The fundamental idea, the impulse of vitality striving in each person after the absolute, is here manifested as the subject of the entire drama. Its unattainable goal is the condition of absolute blessedness . . . and thus the whole introduction bears the character of *resignation*. The languishing impulse issues of necessity (unwillkürlich) from the soul; this renunciation of happiness which cannot be realised is a product of the conscious mind. Throughout the prelude, even in the moments of joyful exaltation, we are in a condition of complete passivity. . . . The ground-tone of the *Nibelungen* is the pleasurable life-impulse (see the introduction to *Rheingold*); in *Tristan* we feel that such pleasure is beyond our reach in this life. The ideal is altogether transcendent; it oversteps the limits of the sensible world.

The theme of the prelude may be taken from the words of Tristan in the third act:

> Sehnen! sehnen!
> Im Sterben mich zu sehnen,
> Vor Sehnsucht nicht zu sterben!

This theme is enunciated in the very first phrase, in the two

[1] H. Porges, *Tristan und Isolde*, Leipzig, 1906. The treatise is well worth perusal, especially for the musician and the psychologist.

contrasting strains, the falling melody in the violoncellos and the upwards-striving love-motive in the hautboy. The union of the two produces a harmony of extraordinary expressiveness. which has been called "the soul of the Tristan music." It is best understood as the chord of the second degree of the scale in A Minor,[1] to which key the piece pretty closely adheres, the transient modulations into A Major, C, etc., only serving to enforce the feeling of tonality. In the culmination in about the 78th bar it seems prepared to make a dash into distant regions, and there is a time of uncertain tonality, but really the prelude is without any very decided modulation. The love-motive is taken up *forte* and *piu forte* by the wind, the strings, and lastly by the heavy brass, the music becoming more passionate, till in bar 83 it settles down; the soaring violins fall to the earth, and the piece ends as it began, with a reminiscence of the first part. An expressive recitative of the violoncelli and basses then leads into the key of the opening scene, C Minor.[2]

Act I.

The scene opens in a pavilion on the deck of the ship. Isolde is reclining on a couch, her face buried in the pillows. Brangäne's listless attitude as she gazes across the water, the young sailor's ditty to his Irish girl while he keeps watch on the mast, reflect the calmness of the sea as the ship glides before the westerly breeze, and contrast with the tempest raging in Isolde's bosom. Suddenly she starts up in alarm, but Brangäne tries to soothe her, and tells her to the soft undulating accompaniment of two bassoons moving in thirds, with the sailor's

[1] On the "Tristan chord" Dr. Naylor has favoured me with the following comment: "I think that it is dominant in character. That is, it is essentially a step to the dominant harmony. Each voice moves *as little as possible* to an appropriate place in the dominant harmony. Call it what you like, *e.g.* a variant on the augmented sixth, on a usual bass, namely the minor sixth of the key (A), still it is merely a step to the dominant of A."

[2] Those who are interested will find a full analysis of the harmonies in *Bayreuther Blätter*, 1901 (4–6). Mr. Dannreuther has some excellent remarks on Wagner's modulations in his article on Wagner in Grove.

song, how she already sees the loom of the land. "What land?" asks Isolde. "Cornwall? Never!" Then follows a terrific outburst, which may be commended to those who still doubt Wagner's powers as a poet:

> *Is.*—Degenerate race, unworthy of your fathers! Whither, O mother, hast thou bestowed the might over sea and storm? Oh, tame art of the sorceress, brewing balsam-drinks alone! Awake, once more, my bold power! Arise from the bosom in which thou hast hid thyself! Hear my will, ye timorous winds: Hither to battle, to din of the tempest, to the raging whirl of the roaring storm! Awake angry greed from its lair; show it the prey which I offer; bid it shatter this insolent ship, gorge itself on the shivered fragments! What lives thereon, the breathing life, I give to you winds as your guerdon!

The terrified Brangäne tries to calm her and to learn the cause of her anger. She recalls Isolde's strange and cold behaviour on parting from her parents in Ireland and on the voyage. Her efforts are vain; Isolde starts up hastily crying: "Air! Air! Throw open the curtains!"

Scene 2.—The curtain thrown back discloses the deck of the ship with Tristan steering. The scene is admirably truthful: the sailors hauling, the song in the rigging, the obvious time of day—in the "dog-watches"—are little touches of realism which will be appreciated by all who know board-ship life. Isolde's eyes are fixed upon Tristan:

> Chosen by me!—lost to me!
> Death-devoted head—Death-devoted heart!

the two fundamental motives—love and death—being here brought into immediate contact. She turns to Brangäne, and with a look of searing scorn she asks, pointing to Tristan:

> What think'st thou of the slave? . . . him there, who shirks my gaze, and looks on the ground in shame and fear?

Isolde here strikes the note which she maintains throughout the act, until all is changed by the philtre. Never has such

annihilating sarcasm before been represented in the drama. Her rage is volcanic, and uses its most effective weapon. Tristan writhes under her taunts. Even the rhyme, though untranslatable, adds its force as in mockery she continues Brangäne's praise of the hero:

> *Br.*—Dost thou ask of Tristan, beloved lady? the wonder of all lands, the much belauded man, the hero without rival, honour's guard and ban.
>
> *Is.* [interrupting and repeating the phrase in mockery].—Who shrinking from the battle takes refuge where he can, to bring a corpse as bride ——

She commands Brangäne to carry a message to Tristan; she is to remind him that he has not yet waited upon her as his duty requires:

> *Br.*—Shall I request him to attend you?
>
> *Is.*—[Tell him that] I, Isolde, *command* my presumptuous [servant] fear for his *mistress*.

Brangäne makes her way through the sailors. Tristan is in a reverie, scarcely conscious of what is going on around him; the love-motive in the hautboy shows how his thoughts are occupied. He starts at the name of Isolde, but collects himself and tries to conceal his evident distress under a manner of supercilious indifference. Brangäne becomes more urgent; he pleads his inability to come now because he cannot leave the helm. Then Brangäne delivers Isolde's message in the same peremptory words in which she received it. Kurwenal suddenly starts up, and with or without permission sends *his* answer to Isolde. Tristan, he says, is no servant of hers, for he is giving her the crown of Cornwall and the heritage of England: "Let her mark that, though it anger a thousand mistress Isoldes!" and as Brangäne hurries back to the pavilion he sings after her an insulting song in derision of Morold and his expedition:

> His head now hangs in Ireland,
> As tribute sent from England.

As she closes the curtain the sailors are heard singing the refrain of his song, which is a masterpiece of popular music. One can imagine it to be the national song of the Cornish men after the expedition. Mention may here be made of a peculiarity of modulation which, if I mistake not, Wagner adopted from Liszt. We have already, in *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, met with phrases repeated a semitone higher; here the repetition is a third higher (B♭ to D). The device is very frequent in *Tristan*, for example in the first bars of the prelude.

Scene 3 (the interior of the pavilion, the curtains closed).—Isolde has heard the message, but makes Brangäne repeat everything as it happened. Inexpressibly pregnant is the turn which she gives to the words of the song as she repeats the phrase:

> *Is.* (bitterly).—How should he safely steer the ship to King Marke's land . . . [with sudden emphasis, quickly] to hand him the *tribute* which he brings from Ireland.

the last sentence being to the refrain of the song.

There now begins a movement of great musical interest, in which Isolde tells Brangäne of Tristan's previous visit to her as "Tantris," recounting how she discovered him by the splinter of the sword, the words "er sah mir in die Augen" bringing the characteristic form of the love-motive with the falling seventh (No. 14c). She tells "how a hero keeps his oath." Tantris returned as Tristan to carry her off "for Cornwall's weary king":

> *Is.*—While Morold lived who would have dared to offer us such an insult? . . . Woe, woe to me! Unwitting I brought all this shame upon myself. Instead of wielding the avenging sword, helpless I let it fall—and now I serve my vassal!

Again rage overcomes her at the thought of Tristan's treachery. Her inflamed imagination conjures up his report of her to King Marke:

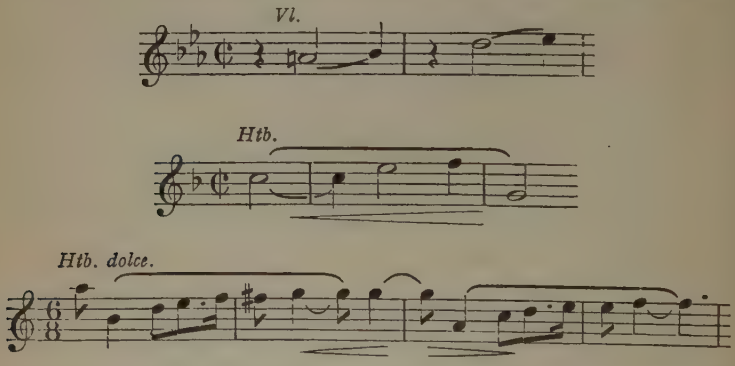
> *Is.*—That were a prize indeed, my lord and uncle! How seems she to thee as a bride? The dainty Irish maid I 'll

bring. I know the ways and paths. One sign from thee to Ireland I fly; Isolde, she is thine. The adventure laughs to me!—Curse on the infamous villain! Curse on thy head! Vengeance! Death! Death to us both!

Brangäne is distracted:

Br. [with impetuous tenderness.]—O sweet, dear, beloved, gracious, golden mistress, darling Isolde, hear me. Come, rest thee here [she draws her gently to the couch].

The music presents no special difficulties. The whole movement is built on a motive which has grown out of the love-motive by contrary motion with a characteristic rhythmic accompaniment. Wagner has remarked in one of his essays how Beethoven will sometimes break up his motives, and, taking one fragment, often consisting of not more than two notes, will develop it into something entirely new. The following scene is built on motives developed out of the last two notes of the love-motive, either with or without the falling seventh:

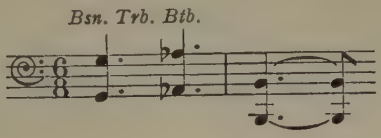


Brangäne, it should here be noted, entirely misunderstands the situation. She is represented as a complete contrast to Isolde, as one of those soft, pliable natures who are capable of the most tender, self-sacrificing devotion, but are utterly wanting in judgment. Woman-like, she thinks it is only a passing storm, which she can soothe with caressing words. Her scarcely veiled suggestion that though Isolde may marry Marke

she need not cease to love Tristan shows the enormous gulf which separates her from her terrible mistress. She suggests administering the philtre which her mother has prepared for Marke to Tristan. The music, in which, so long as Brangäne is speaking, gaiety and tenderness are mingled, is permeated with the love-motive. Isolde thinks of her mother's spells with very different feelings; the music becomes gloomy, and with the words "Vengeance for treachery—rest for my heart in need!" the death-motive, with its solemn trombone chords, betrays the thought in her mind. She orders Brangäne to bring the casket. Brangäne obeys, and innocently recounts all the wonderful remedies which it contains:

> *Br.*—For woe and wounds is balsam; for evil poisons antidotes. The best of all, I hold it here [holding up the love-potion].
>
> *Is.*—Thou errest. I know it better [seizing the black bottle with the death-drink and holding it aloft].—*This* is the drink I need!

A motive already heard in the prelude (bar 29) now becomes very prominent in the brass:



The ship is now nearing the port, and the crew are heard taking in the sails preparatory to anchoring. Kurwenal, Tristan's henchman, enters abruptly.

Scene 4.—I have already remarked how happily Wagner has contrived to depict the character of board-ship life. Here it is the clatter and bustle of coming into port; people hurrying about the deck, the young sailor's motive joyously ringing from the violins and wood; sailors hauling, and the colours fluttering in the breeze (semiquaver motives in clarinets and bassoons), all are preparing for the shore. Kurwenal enters and roughly orders "the women" to get themselves ready to land. Isolde

is to prepare herself at once to appear before King Marke, escorted by Tristan. Isolde, startled at first by Kurwenal's insolence, collects herself and replies with dignity :

> Take my greetings to Sir Tristan and deliver him my message. If I am to go at his side to stand before King Marke, I cannot do so with propriety unless I first receive expiation for guilt still unatoned. Therefore let him seek my grace. (On Kurwenal making an impatient gesture she continues with more emphasis.) Mark me well and deliver it rightly : I will not land with him, I will not walk by his side to stand before King Marke unless he first ask of me in due form to forgive and forget his yet unatoned guilt. This grace I offer him.

Kurwenal retires, rather crest-fallen, to deliver her message. The orchestral accompaniment during her speech has a very solemn character, with slow passages of the trombones *piano*, while, in the pauses, runs on the violins mark Kurwenal's impatience. The " death " motive will be noted at the words " guilt still unatoned."

Isolde when left alone with the only friend who is true to her throws aside all her haughty manner, forgets her wild thirst for revenge, and for a moment gives way to all the tenderness which is hidden beneath that fierce exterior. Death is just before her ; she throws herself into Brangäne's arms and delivers her last messages to her parents and to the world. The unhappy girl, still quite in the dark as to her mistress's intentions, only vaguely feeling the presage of some impending calamity, is told to bring the casket and to take out the death-potion, Isolde significantly repeating the words in the previous scene. Brangäne, almost out of her senses, obeys instinctively ; in the midst of her entreaties Kurwenal throws back the curtain and announces Tristan.

Scene 5.—The following scene is perfectly clear. The two principal personages now, for the first time since they left Ireland, stand face to face. The first part is a trial of wits between them, in which Tristan is as helpless as a bird in the claws of a cat. There is not a trace of love in Isolde's words ; nothing but anger and contempt. In other parts of the act

there are indications of smouldering fire which threatens to break out upon occasion, but there is nothing of the kind when they are together. If once when he lay helpless and in her power she was touched with pity for so noble a hero, that has long ago been overcome, or only remains as a distant memory. It has been truly observed that Tristan and Isolde are not like Romeo and Juliet, two children scarcely conscious of what they are doing. Both are in the full maturity of life, and in the vigour of their intellectual powers.

After some preliminary *persiflage*, in which she laughs to scorn the excuses which he offers of having kept away from a sense of propriety, she at once comes to the point :

> *Is.*—There is blood-feud between us !
> *Tr.*—That was expiated.
> *Is.*—Not between us !
> *Tr.*—In open field, before all the host, a solemn peace was sworn.
> *Is.*—Not there was it that I hid Tantris, not there that Tristan fell to me. Noble and strong he stood before me ; but I swore not what he swore ; I had learned to be silent. When he lay sick in the quiet room, speechless I stood before him with the sword. My lips were silent ; my hand I restrained, but the vow of my lips and hand I silently swore to keep. Now I will fulfil my oath.
> *Tr.*—What didst thou vow, O woman ?
> *Is.*—Vengeance for Morold.
> *Tr.*—Is that what is troubling you ?

Once, and once only, does the victim turn to retort upon her with her own weapon of irony. The attempt is disastrous. At once changing her tone she assumes the air of an injured woman. Tristan has taken her lover from her, and does he now dare to mock her ? As her thoughts wander back to past days of happiness she continues in strains of surpassing tenderness :

> Betrothed he was to me, the proud Irish hero ; his arms I had hallowed ; for me he went to battle. When he fell my honour fell. In the heaviness of my heart I swore that if no man would avenge the murder, I, a maiden, would take it upon me. Sick and weary, in my power, why did I then not smite thee ?

There is a solemn pause in the music; the love-motive is once uttered by the bass-clarinet. Nothing is left for the vanquished and humbled hero but to offer what atonement he can. He hands her his sword, bidding her this time wield it surely, and not let it fall from her hand, only to be answered with scorn even more scathing: "No," she says, "what would King Marke say were I to slay *his best servant?*"

> How badly I should serve thy lord! . . . Keep thy sword! I swung it once when vengeance was rife in my bosom, while thy measuring glance was stealing my image to know whether I should be a fit bride for King Marke. I then let it fall. Now let us drink atonement.

The motive of the drink of death (see p. 327) is here heard on the trombones, and together with the death-motive proper (No. 15) recurs frequently in the following portion.

Isolde then signs to Brangäne to bring the drink. The noise of the sailors furling the sails on deck becomes louder:

> *Tr.* (starting from a reverie).—Where are we?
> *Is.*—CLOSE TO THE PORT! [death-motive]. Tristan! shall I have atonement? What hast thou to answer?
> *Tr.* (darkly).—The mistress of silence commands me silence. I grasp what she conceals, and am silent upon what she cannot grasp.

A dark saying, of which fortunately we have the explanation from Wagner himself. "What she conceals" is her love for Tristan; "what she cannot grasp" is that his honour forbids him from declaring his love for her.[1]

Even now, on the brink of dissolution, while actually holding the cup which is to launch them both into eternity, Isolde cannot bridle her sarcasm:

> *Is.*—We have reached the goal; soon shall we stand—(with light scorn) before King Marke! [death-motive].

With dreadful irony she rehearses the words with which she supposes Tristan will introduce her:

[1] Glasenapp's *Biography*, v. 241 (footnote).

My lord and uncle! look now on her! A softer wife thou ne'er couldst find. I slew her lover, and sent her his head. My life was in her power, but the gentle maid left it to me; her country's shame and dishonour—that she gave as well; all that she might become thy wedded bride. Such thanks for kindly deeds I earned by a sweet draught of atonement offered to me by her favour, in expiation of my guilt.

Sailors (outside).—Stand by the cable! Let go the anchor!

Tr. (starting wildly)—Let go the anchor! Veer her round to the tide! (He tears the cup from Isolde's hand.) Well know I Ireland's queen and the wondrous might of her arts. I took the balsam which she gave me; now I take the cup, that quite I may recover. Mark well the oath of peace in which I give my thanks:

To Tristan's honour[1]—highest faith!
To Tristan's woe—bold defiance!

Delusion of the heart! Dream of presage! Sole comfort of eternal sorrow! Kind drink of forgetfulness, I drink thee without flinching! [He puts the cup to his lips and drinks.]

Is. (tearing the cup from him).—Treachery again! Half to me! Traitor, I drink to thee! (She drinks and dashes the cup to the ground.)

Instead of falling dead the lovers stand transfixed, gazing at each other. Brangäne has changed the flasks, and they have drunk the draught of love instead of death. Wagner sometimes expects his artist to possess powers beyond those which are allotted to man. The actors have to express by gesture the change of feeling which gradually comes over them. They start, tremble, the love-motive steals into and at last dominates the orchestra, and they fly into one another's arms.

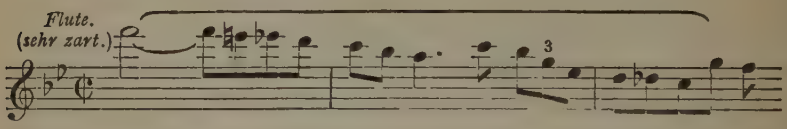
The increasing commotion outside, the cheers of the men, indicate that King Marke has put out from the shore and is nearing the ship. An aside of Brangäne at this moment is significant. As she realises the consequences of what she has done she gives way to despair. How much better would a speedy death have been than the prospect of the life which is now before them! The lovers raise their voices in a jubilant duet. Almost unconscious of their surroundings

[1] "Ehre" and "Elend" are datives.

they are dragged apart, the royal garments are hastily thrown over her, and the curtain falls to the joyful shouts of the people as King Marke steps on board.

Act II.

If the essence of the drama consists in contrasts and surprises then *Tristan und Isolde* is the most dramatic of Wagner's works. In the first act we had the picture of a woman of volcanic temperament goaded to fury by cruelty and insult ; in the second we have the same woman, gentle, light-hearted, caressing, with nothing left of her past self except the irresistible force of her will. Isolde is not restrained by any scruples about honour, nor need she have any ; in full possession of the man she loves, she can abandon herself to the moment. The music almost shows the flush upon her cheek, and she seems twenty years younger. She is quite conscious of the inevitable end, and quite prepared to meet it, but that is as nothing in the fulness of the present moment. Her words and her actions are characterised by a playful recklessness, an *abandon* which finds admirable expression in a characteristic motive :



Ideally connected with this is another motive, in which the syncopated fourth quaver in each half-bar imparts a nervous, restless character which at the meeting of the lovers becomes a delirium of joy.

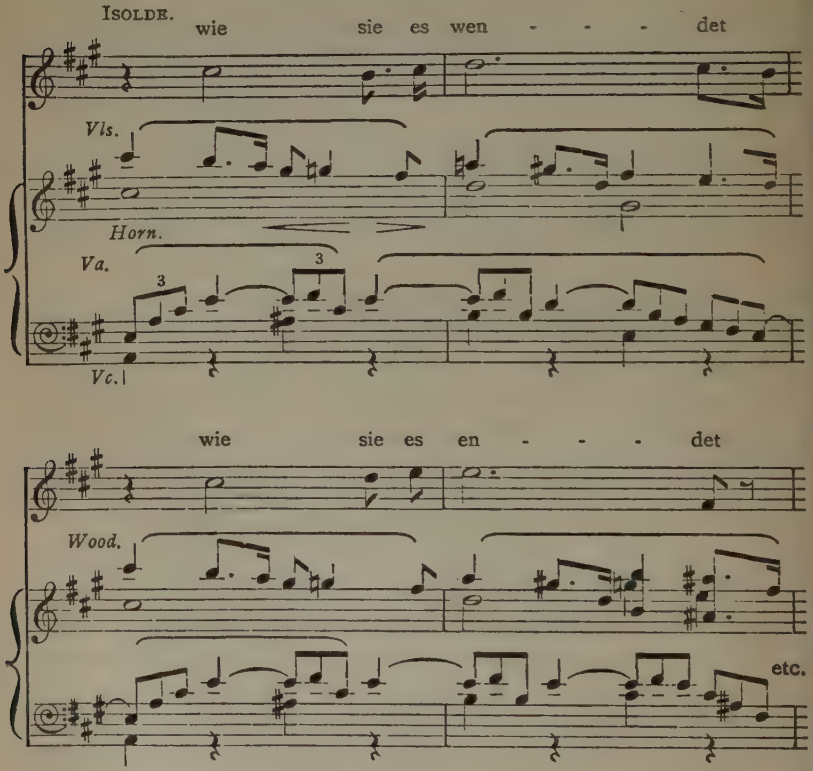
The events of the second act seem to take place in the evening of the day after the landing. The lovers have arranged a meeting in the palace garden in front of Isolde's quarters after the night has set in. A burning torch is fixed to the door, its lowering is to be her signal for Tristan to approach. King Marke and the Court are away on a hunt, and the signal cannot be given until all is quiet.

The prelude opens with an emphatic announcement of the principal motive of the act (the "Daylight," No. 16) in the full orchestra without brass. A cantabile strain in the bass wood-wind, continued in the violoncello with a broken triplet accompaniment in the strings seems to tell of the expected meeting. It is a clear summer night; the horns of the hunting-party grow fainter in the distance. Brangäne, with anxiety in her expression, is listening attentively and waiting for them to cease when Isolde enters. The key is B♭ Major. In the bass a pedal F is sustained by two deep horns, while six horns on the stage play a fanfare on the chord of C Minor, alternating with that of F Major. Brangäne and Isolde listen attentively; Isolde thinks the horns are gone; she can hear nought but the rustling of the leaves and the murmuring of the stream. Here the fanfare is taken over by the wood-wind, and at last melts into a new sound, with clarinets in 6/8 time against muted violins in 8/8 and sustaining horns, beautifully suggestive of the rustling of leaves. At last the horns die away in the distance. Brangäne has been on the alert; she suspects a trap in this hunting party, which has been arranged by Tristan's friend Melot, but she doubts his good faith. Isolde gaily laughs at her cares; her heart is bursting, and she recks of nothing but the approach of Tristan. The music is almost entirely made up of her joyful strain, and there begins that wonderful lyric outpouring which has placed the second act of *Tristan* on an eminence of its own, apart and unapproached, culminating in the nocturne. She throws open the flood-gates of her heart:

> Te, dea, te fugiunt venti, te nubila caeli
> Adventumque tuum, tibi suavis daedala tellus
> Summittit flores, tibi rident aequora ponti,
> Placatumque nitet diffuso lumine caelum.

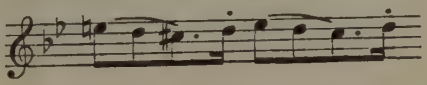
Brangäne fondly thinks it is her work. "Thy work!" replies Isolde. "O foolish maid! knowest thou not the might of *Frau Minne?*" The accompaniment of the ode is throughout in keeping with the rhapsodical character of the words and melody; note the persistent A of the violins in octaves at the

words "des kühnen Muthes Königin, des Weltenwerdens Walterin," followed by their joyous upward flight; the broken chords of the harp; the swelling upward semitones of flute, hautboy and clarinet; the soft trombone chords; the arpeggios of the violas, and the wonderfully poetic climax with harps, flute and hautboy at the end of the first portion: "des Todes Werk. . . . Frau Minne hat es meiner Macht entwandt." Much of the beauty of tone-colour is due to the balanced distribution of the parts in the soft brass and wood-wind. Much may be gained from a study of the orchestral score. As an example of its polyphonic structure I give one extract from p. 98 of the piano arrangement:



Brangäne's entreaties are vain; again she cannot feel what Isolde feels—notice the difference between her melody and the soaring freedom of Isolde's. A little later on Isolde's immovable resolution is admirably expressed by her persistence on one note. At last she seizes the torch and hurls it to the ground in a terrific downward rush of the strings and the yell of the death-motive in the trumpets, the entire orchestra with drums and trumpets being heard together for the first time.

Scene 2.—Isolde signals to her lover with her white scarf to music redolent of Weber's *Oberon*, and of the transition to the final movement of Beethoven's Sonata "Les Adieux." From the moment when he enters neither words nor music come to full articulation; all is swept away in the whirlwind of the dominant rhythm:



We take up the scene again when the storm has in some measure subsided, at the words "wie lange fern, wie fern so lang!" The text needs close attention, and I must invite those of my readers who have been driven back by the difficulties of the language to accompany me along the dull path of literal translation and comment. The key-note of the dialogue is the opposition of day and night, typifying delusion and reality, avidyâ and vidyâ:[1]

εὕδουσα γὰρ φρὴν ὄμμασιν λαμπρύνεται,
ἐν ἡμέρᾳ δὲ μοῖρ' ἀπρόσκοπος βροτῶν.

The dialogue cannot be understood by the rationalist theory that love and marriage are things to be contracted for the sake of the benefits that they bring to both parties. Those

[1] The reader who is not versed in Indian philosophy will find an account of these terms and of the doctrines of the Upanishads in Professor Max Müller's *Three Lectures on the Vedânta Philosophy*.

who approach it from that standpoint must be content with the explanation that love is a form of lunacy; this is not quite the poet's intention. With Wagner love is a *sacrifice*, or for those who so prefer it, a *sacrament*. Hence the deep mystery of its kinship with death, typified in the Hindu phallic emblem of the *ling*. In the present scene it is often difficult to say whether the strains denote the languishing of love or the fading away of life. The best preparation for the scene would be to read the opening portion of the seventh book of Plato's *Republic*. Wagner knew the *Republic* well, and it is difficult to think that it was not in his mind when he composed the scene. The idea comes at once to the front in Isolde's enigmatical:

Im Dunkel Du, im Lichte ich.

We remember that according to Plato there are two kinds of blindness: one is from living in the dark, the blindness of ignorance; the other from having gazed too steadfastly on the sun before the eyes were strong enough to bear it. Tristan was dazzled with the light of the sun, and therefore blind to the truth; but with Wagner the sun is not, as with Plato, the source of all light and truth, but rather the enemy of love and truth. The meaning of the line just quoted is in prosaic language: "You were blinded by politics and ambition; I saw more clearly." Tristan understands her as meaning the light of the torch, for the extinction of which he was so long waiting. The whole scene, including the pulling down of the torch, is a majestic metaphor of day and night, typifying worldly interest and love.

We resume at p. 114 of the piano arrangement. I translate literally:

> *Tr.*—The day, the day that glossed thee o'er, that carried Isolde away from me thither where she resembled the sun in the gleam and light of highest glory. That which enchanted my eye, debased my heart to the earth. How could Isolde be mine in the bright light of the day?
>
> *Is.*—Was not she who chose thee thine? What did the wicked day lie to thee, that thou shouldest betray thy beloved who was destined for thee?

Tr.—That which glossed thee o'er with splendour, the radiance of honour, the might of glory, the dream of hanging my heart upon these held me in bonds. The day-sun of worldly honours, which with the clear refulgence of its shimmer shone bright upon my head with the vain delight of its rays, penetrated through my head into the deep recesses of my heart. That which there watched, darkly sealed in the chaste night, that which unconscious I there received as it dawned, an image which my eyes would not dare to scan, when touched by the light of day lay open gleaming before me.

In these mysterious words Tristan indicates the impression which Isolde made upon him at their first meeting. He regarded her through the spectacles of his political ambition, with its vain delight of personal glory, which had penetrated from his head to his heart. It illumined the image of Isolde slumbering unconsciously ("ohne Wiss' und Wahn") in his breast, and revealed it to the day, namely as a prize in the political game which he was playing.

—That which seemed to me so glorious and so noble, I glorified before the whole assembly; before all people I loudly extolled the most lovely royal bride of the earth. The envy which the day had awakened, the jealousy which dreaded my good fortune, the misfavour which began to embarrass my honour and my glory—I defied them all, and faithfully determined, to uphold my honour and my glory, to go to Ireland.

Here (p.a., p. 119, at the words "Getäuscht von ihm . . . ") there begins a new development of the "daylight"-motive (No. 16), with the first indication of the syncopated accompaniment, which forms so prominent a feature of the subsequent portion. Explanations are now finished; the words begin to find wings. For moments it seems as if all consciousness of earthly existence were lost and the lovers were dissolved into dreamland:

Wo des Trugs geahnter Wahn zerrinne. . . .

Here we must draw the veil; the drama is at a standstill, dissolved into music, the feverish throbs of syncopated triplets,

death and love, daylight and the starry heavens coalescing into a tissue of polyphonic melody such as no mortal ear ever heard before or since. As the last bonds of life are torn asunder the "death"-motive assumes a new form, and becomes a cry of unutterable anguish (No. 15A), and the scene resolves itself into a nocturne, Brangäne's voice blending harmoniously with the voices of the night.[1]

The lovers are now united in love and in death; with renewed hope and courage they joyfully greet the night which is closing over them. Suddenly there is a cry from Brangäne who is watching outside, and Kurwenal rushes in with drawn sword. He, of course, has no notion of the psychic situation, and calls to Tristan to save himself. King Marke enters with Melot and his followers. Tristan stands screening Isolde as best he can with his mantle, facing the King, and listening to the calm, dispassionate story of his treachery—that Tristan, "trùest of the true," "the treasure-house of all honour," says Marke—"that he should have deceived me—who can tell the fearful deep mysterious cause?" Tristan cannot answer, but the orchestra replies in its own language.

Tristan now turns full round to Isolde and bids her declare whether she is prepared to follow him to the land whither he is now going: "the dark land of the night, whence my mother erst sent me forth when she bore me in death." His voice takes up the melody of the preceding scene. Her reply is, if possible, even more sublime: When Tristan carried her to a strange country she had to follow; now he calls her to his own, where he holds possession and heritage; how should she refuse to go? "Let Tristan lead the way; Isolde will follow."

He then calls upon Melot to fight with him; at the first pass Tristan allows the sword to drop from his hand and falls wounded to the ground.

[1] I have analysed the complex structure of this wonderful Nocturne elsewhere, and prefer not to repeat the analysis here; for the dialogue see the last chapter. This is the crisis, where she awakens to his meaning. Henceforward she appears in a celestial halo, transfigured, and in a higher sphere, discarding all personality to be merged in "des Welt-Athems wehendem All."

Act III.

Wagner has described the slow introduction to Beethoven's C♯ Minor quartet as the saddest music ever written. If there is anything sadder it is the instrumental introduction to the third act of *Tristan und Isolde*. Tristan, after having been wounded by Melot, has been carried off by Kurwenal to his own home, Kareol in Brittany, where he is discovered lying asleep on his couch in the castle garden, Kurwenal by his side. Nothing could exceed the desolation of the scene, nor the utter woe expressed in the music, which begins with a new transformation of the love-motive (No. 14D). Isolde alone can cure the sick man, and word has been sent to her to come from Cornwall. Her ship is just expected, and the shepherd who is on the watch outside plays a mournful strain so long as the ship is not seen, to be changed to a joyful one when she appears in sight. The plaintive strain, Wagner tells us, was perhaps inspired by the songs of the gondoliers when he was in Venice. It is played on the *cor anglais*, an instrument capable of very great expression in the hands of a skilful player.

Scene 1.—In the first scene of the act Kurwenal attains an importance far beyond what he had in the first and second acts. He, too, is changed; he is no longer the rough, unmannerly servant; the events which have passed and the responsibility now resting upon him have brought out the finer qualities of his nature. There is noticeable in his melody all through the act an air of freedom and lofty devotion not heard before. He is chastened, and there is a refinement and tenderness which may surprise those who have not observed what delicacy and sensitiveness are often hidden beneath a rough exterior in the lower classes.

After a short conversation between Kurwenal and the shepherd Tristan awakes, asking with a feeble voice where he is. Kurwenal relates how he has brought him to Kareol, where he is soon to recover from wounds and death. It is some

time before Tristan fully understands, and as memory awakens he tells of where he has been, speaking as one inspired :

> I was there where I have ever been, whither for ever I go ; in the wide realm of the world-night, where there is but one knowledge—divine utter oblivion.

The words are accompanied by *pianissimo* chords of trombones and tuba. It is the first time that the heavy brass has been heard in this act, and the effect is excessively solemn. He continues :

> How has this foretaste of eternal night departed from me ? Shall I call thee a yearning memory that has driven me once more to the light of day ?

The phrase which has been associated with the metaphor of daylight is united with the languishing love-motive and with No. 15 ; of these three motives the following part is chiefly made up. The combination is expressed in Tristan's word " Todes-Wonne-Graun," the awful joy of death. The culmination is reached at the strongly alliterative words : " Weh' nun wächst bleich und bang mir des Tages wilder Drang," where for the moment there is quite a maze of voices in wood-wind and strings. Immediately following is a very curious passage, nothing less than a succession of augmented chords in an upward chromatic scale. For a moment Kurwenal seems overawed by the words and sufferings of his beloved master. His free bounding spirits are gone, and he speaks like a broken man. But he recovers his former mood as he tells of Isolde's expected arrival. The news, scarcely comprehended at first, is the signal for an outburst of joy so violent that it brings on a return of delirious raving. Tristan seems to see the ship, the sails filling to the wind, the colours flying ; but at that moment the sad strains of the shepherd's lay tell him that she has not yet appeared. He knows the tune too well ; it once bewailed his father's death and his mother's fate when she brought him forth and died ; now it tells his own lot :

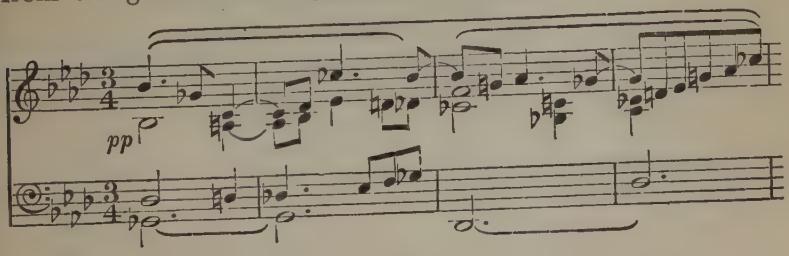
> To long—and die ; to die—and to long. No ! Not so ! rather to long and long, dying to long, and not to die of longing.

In the following soliloquy the plaintive melody is woven into the orchestral accompaniment and taken over by various instruments in turn. I resume at the words "der Trank! der Trank!" (p.a., p. 207):

> The draught! The draught! the terrible draught! How it raged from my heart to my head. . . . Nowhere may I find rest. The night casts me back on the day, for ever to feed the sun's rays on my suffering. . . . The fearful draught which has consigned me to this torment, I, I myself brewed it! Out of [my] father's woe and [my] mother's anguish, of tears of love ever and aye, of laughing and weeping, joys and wounds, I have gathered its poisons. Thou draught which I brewed, which flowed for me, which I joyfully quaffed, accursed be thou! accursed he who brewed thee!

He sinks once more into unconsciousness. This drink, this fearful draught which has brought him into his present condition, is the work of his whole life, the outcome of all his former deeds. Both music and words of this soliloquy offer great difficulties, and are worthy of close study, especially with attention to the *tempo*. The climax culminates with the F♯ Minor chord in the 6/4 position with full brass and drums; then sudden silence in the orchestra, only the soft roll of the drum is left—as the voice utters the words "furchtbarer Trank," the full orchestra crashing in on the last syllable.

As he lies in a swoon the wood-wind continues the malediction. Kurwenal stands beside him, uncertain whether he is alive or dead. The tone changes entirely and gives way to a heavenly calm. The syncopated triplets of the second act return, and above them floats a melody of exquisite tenderness, first in the hautboy, then in the clarinet. A strain from the garden meeting:



is taken up insistently by the horns; the accents of Isolde's voice are hovering in his thoughts, and her vision seems to float towards him over the sea. As he reads in Kurwenal's looks that she is not yet in sight he once more threatens to become violent, when suddenly the joyful tune, the signal of Isolde's approach, is heard from the shepherd.

Scene 2.—The catastrophe now follows quickly. Kurwenal goes to meet Isolde, and directly he is away Tristan begins to toss in his bed. Several motives of the preceding are hinted at, strange, restless orchestration and 7/4 time seem to indicate that something is pending. At last there breaks out in the lower strings and the wood the melody just quoted, but now how changed! The tender, dreamy strain, now in distorted 5/4 rhythm, appears like a dance of death, first in C Major. A short climax brings it in A Major, and again in C with the utmost fury, and the force of the entire orchestra. It is as if the very gates of hell had burst and every fiend were dancing around him, shrieking: "Live! Live! and be for ever damned! false knight! perjured lover!" He springs from his couch, tears the bandages from his body; the blood streams from his wound; hearing the voice of Isolde approaching, he staggers to the middle of the stage and sinks into her arms as she enters. Like a long dying breath the love-motive is heard in the wood-wind as breathing the word "Isolde" he expires. The orchestra dies away; one broken chord is heard on the harp, and the muted violoncello continues the love-motive.

Isolde is left alone with Kurwenal, who has followed her. The soliloquy in which she laments the cruel destruction of her plan for saving Tristan recalls the scene of Donna Anna before her dead father:

> Art thou dead? Tarry but for one hour, one only hour. Such anxious days longing she watched, to watch but one more hour with thee. Will Tristan beguile Isolde of the one last, ever-short world-happiness? The wound? where? Let me heal it, that joyful and serene we may share the night together. Not of the wound—die not of the wound! Let us both united close our eyes to the light of heaven. . . .

Sounds are heard without. Another ship has arrived, and with it King Marke in pursuit of the fugitive princess. Hastily the gates of the castle are barricaded. Brangäne's voice is heard imploring those within not to resist. It is vain; Kurwenal leaves no time for parley, but rushes madly upon them and is at once pierced through. He is just able to reach his master's body and die beside it. Marke, when he has forced an entry, finds nothing but death. Brangäne notices that Isolde is still living and explains. The secret of the love-potion has been told to King Marke and he has hurried up to renounce his intention of wedding Isolde and to unite her to Tristan.

It needed but a few minutes' delay for all to have ended happily. Why did not the poet take the opportunity offered and spare us the harrowing scenes at the end? Why could he not have lowered the curtain on the lovers united with Marke's blessing? The answer has been given in the last chapter. The whole course of the tragic action lies in the expiation of Tristan's guilt. His guilt is not diminished by Marke's generosity, and to have left it unatoned would have rendered the whole drama meaningless.

Isolde now rises to bid her last farewell before she departs with Tristan. She is speaking in a trance, with ecstatic visions before her. The orchestral accompaniment, beginning quietly, gradually swells into a torrent of music quite unrivalled among Wagner's great finales. The end of *Götterdämmerung* is impressive because of the gathering together of the musical motives of Siegfried's life, but as a musical composition it cannot compare with the end of *Tristan*. As the end approaches the love-motive absorbs the whole orchestra; the wonderful euphony of tone, the harmony and peacefulness which pervade the surging mass of instruments, are a fitting end to the overwhelming tragedy; we are borne away from the earth in a heavenward flight. Isolde does not die; she is carried upwards on the pinions of love, dissolved in the ocean of endless melody. I close with a nearly literal translation of her parting words:

Mild and gentle how he smileth,
Sweetly how his eyes he opens.
See ye, see ye not, my friends ?
Ever brighter how he shineth,
Star-enhaloed how he riseth,
How the heart swells brave within him,
Full and glorious beats his bosom ?
From his lips so sweet and winsome
Softly how the breath escapes ?
Feel ye, see ye not, my friends ?
When I hear this strain so wondrous
Softly murm'ring, sadly joyous,
All-declaring, mildly healing,
Sounding from him, upwards soaring,
Penetrating, sweet resounding,
Now encircling, loudly ringing,
Ever surging round me.
Are they gentle undulations
Of the breezes wafting o'er me ?
Are they waves of fragrance ?
How they swell around me rushing !
Shall I breathe them ? shall I listen,
Feast upon them, dive beneath them,
Sweetly breathe myself away
In the surging tones,
In the toning mass,
In the waves of the welling breath of the All,
Drown within them—sink unconscious—
Highest Bliss ?

Many years ago, when the present writer was studying Wagner's scores with Felix Draeseke, he said : " *Tristan* is a work for the musical epicure." The wisest remark which has been made on it was spoken by Wagner himself : " *Tristan* was worth doing once." The hot-house atmosphere, the highly-strung nervous tension, are not for every-day life, nor for all people. They are for the strong, and for them only at rare intervals. With all its entrancing beauties its influence on the development of music has not on the whole been for good. It has had many imitators, but not everybody can wield the bow of Odysseus. The luscious, languishing chromatic harmonies are only too easy to imitate ; the lofty moral purpose

may easily become an attitude. It is an invariable rule that whenever an artist sets himself to imitate another he copies only his weaknesses. The most gifted continuator of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* has been Richard Strauss, in his *Guntram*. "After *Tristan*," he said at the time when he was composing it, "death is no longer tragic"; his work ends with voluntary resignation. But it was a failure. Wagner's *Tristan* marks the highest point that art has ever reached in the tragic drama, but it can never be repeated or imitated.

CHAPTER XXII

WANDERING AND RUIN

AGAIN Wagner was a ruined man. He had been maintained during his stay in Paris by advances from Erlanger, but the funds on which he had reckoned for repaying him were not forthcoming. He had received as royalty for the three *Tannhäuser* representations 750 francs, all of which he gave to Roche, who was in needy circumstances. There was talk of trying again, even of building a special theatre for his works ; the scheme was not dropped till shortly before the Franco-German war. As usual, Wagner took the catastrophe very calmly ; he regarded it as a judgment upon himself. He had gone to Paris to make money, and he now resolved never again to be influenced by sordid motives. Some help towards tiding over the moment was afforded him by the two German Embassies, and he turned to new efforts. His main hope was now in *Tristan*, which had everywhere been declared impossible ; now that he had access to Germany he meant to show that under his supervision it was possible. Soon after the withdrawal of *Tannhäuser* in Paris, on April 15th, he went to Karlsruhe, whither von Bülow, ever indefatigable in his interests, had preceded him. He was warmly received by the Grand Duke, who honoured him more on account of his sufferings in the cause of freedom than for his art, of which he knew little. It was settled that *Tristan* should be given on the Grand Duke's birthday, September 9th. As in Paris, he was to choose his singers where he would ; they should be specially engaged for the occasion. At the same time there was a proposal to give *Das Rheingold* in Prague, but he declined, partly from reluctance to give one number of the

Ring without the rest, partly because it would clash with Karlsruhe. Graf Pourtalès made an effort to induce King Wilhelm (the quondam Prince of Prussia) to command a performance of *Tannhäuser* for Wagner's benefit, but failed, mainly, it is said, owing to the opposition of von Hülsen, the *Intendant.*

After a brief return to Paris, where he hoped to meet Liszt, but was disappointed, Wagner started on a tour with the intention of visiting the principal German theatres to select singers for his *Tristan.* He first turned his steps to Vienna, and now for the first time heard *Lohengrin.* On recognizing him in the theatre the audience broke into tumultuous cheering, every pause in the performance bringing a new ovation, at the end so loud and prolonged that he was constrained to speak from the stage a few words of acknowledgment. Never had such scenes been witnessed in Vienna; they were repeated a few days later at a representation of *Der Holländer.* Now that his presence had become known all that was musical in Vienna united to do him honour. It rained ovations, serenades, performances of his works, invitations, until, fairly worn out, he had to put a check on their flattering importunity. With the performance at the Opera-house he was delighted. Frau Meyer-Dustmann seemed as if born for the part of "Isolde," and he wanted her for Karlsruhe. But the Vienna authorities were anxious to bring out *Tristan* on their own stage, and refused permission to their singers to go elsewhere. It was therefore arranged that the work should be given in Vienna on October 1st, instead of in Karlsruhe.

In Vienna Wagner found himself in the midst of a circle of Liszt-worshippers, Tausig, Cornelius, etc., and Joseph Standhartner, an eminent physician of the town, himself an amateur musician, and above all an ardent admirer of the new school. Here he also again met Heinrich Laube, then in the height of his career as Director of the *Hofburg Theatre.* On May 22nd he surprised the Wesendonks with a flying visit to Zurich, and on the following day went to Karlsruhe, where he

had to break the news of his change of programme to the Grand Duke. Wagner's biographers attribute his tergiversation to intrigues of Devrient. At the same time, it must be remembered that he was in a difficult situation; *Tristan* had almost universally been condemned as impossible, and was not at all easy to place. From Karlsruhe he went on with Tausig to Paris, where he found Minna engaged in breaking up the household.

In Paris he met Liszt, who, however, was far too much occupied with other engagements to be much with him. It is impossible not to recognise that from this time, that is from the time of Liszt's resignation of his post at Weimar and of Wagner's return to Germany, a change had come over the relations of the two friends. There was no breach, but their letters either ceased or have been for the most part suppressed. Liszt's failure to secure a home for Wagner's art in Weimar, to realise in Weimar what was afterwards achieved in Bayreuth, had broken his heart. It was through no fault of Wagner's, and Liszt, of course, was far from attributing any blame to him, but felt that he himself had failed in the purpose of his life, and turned his mind towards a new goal. He went to Rome, and devoted himself to the reform of Catholic church music. In this too he failed. This I believe to have been the real cause of the cloud. It has been asserted that the Princess was using her influence against Wagner, from jealousy at his fame eclipsing that of her own idol. It may have been so; nothing would in itself seem more natural; but the true cause must be sought deeper, and the biographer need not concern himself either with women's intrigues or with passing expressions of temper sedulously gathered up and reproduced by feuilletonists.

From this time, too, the story of Wagner's life ceases to be that of an individual, and becomes that of a great movement in dramatic art. All Germany was divided into two camps. The minority on Wagner's side included all that was intellectual and artistic, all the finer elements of the German nation. The opposition was led by the press, then almost without exception

controlled by Jewish editors and proprietors. Their weapons were not honest expressions of judgment, but scurrility, slander, and noisy advertisement, like that of the lunatic Frenchman, who between the acts stood in front of the box-office in Paris roaring with laughter. The battle was national, and was fought in public. There were indeed many exceptions, but the broad lines of the division were those that I have indicated.

Wagner's last weeks in Paris were spent in the Prussian Embassy, where Graf Pourtalès had offered him hospitality. Minna had already left for Germany to undergo medical treatment at Soden in the Taunus. At the Embassy every provision was made for his comfort by the Attaché, Count Hatzfeld. He there composed the two *Albumblätter*, one of which he dedicated to the Princess Metternich the other to the Countess Pourtalès. On July 29th he left Paris for Weimar, visiting his wife at Soden on the way. In Weimar a festival of musicians was just beginning, and a number of Liszt's friends, including von Bülow, Cornelius, Draeseke, Tausig, Franz Brendel, Alwine Frommann, Ollivier and his wife, had assembled to bid him God-speed in his new sphere of activity. Among the younger members whose compositions were given on this occasion was one Wendelin Weissheimer, a Musikdirektor of Mainz, who had already paid Wagner a visit in Zurich. Liszt then went to Rome, and did not return to Germany for several years.

On August 14th Wagner reached Vienna, intending to begin the rehearsals for *Tristan*. He found the tenor, Ander, suffering from a throat affection, and the work had to be postponed for the present. In the meantime he was stranded, courted everywhere, a " lion " of the most attractive fashionable society of Europe, but without the means of living. For a time the house of Standhartner was at his disposal ; after that he was in an hotel. Ander's condition showed no sign of improving, and Wagner remained idle. The Kapellmeister studied the score diligently, and did all that was in his power to further matters ; other tenors were tried, but found wanting. Wagner wrote to Tichatschek to come to Vienna to save him,

but he felt unequal to the part. Towards the end of October some fragments were privately performed by the orchestra, mainly for the behoof of Princess Metternich, who had returned from Paris. There were insistent rumours in the press that the work had been definitely abandoned as too difficult. Wagner himself had by this time learned to take no notice of what was said about him in the press, but von Bülow again took up the cudgels for him and contradicted the reports. In November Wagner went to Venice on a visit to the Wesendonks.

Wagner must on re-perusing the score of *Tristan* have convinced himself that the complaints of excessive difficulty were not altogether without foundation, and that his original intention of writing a work which should find easier access to the theatres than the gigantic *Ring* had scarcely been achieved. He decided to give up *Tristan* altogether for the present, and to write something which should really be easier. In Venice Mathilde Wesendonk reminded him of his old sketch of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, which he had given to her. He had it sent to him at Vienna. This, he now thought, was the work he needed, one which would go through all the theatres of Germany and make his fortune. On receiving it he at once set to work, composed a great part of the Overture and began negotiations with Schotts Söhne for its publication by October 1st of the following year. Schott was unwilling to take over the performance rights, which were foreign to his line of business, but he arranged with the composer for the right of publication for 10,000 francs (£400).

Wagner's first need was for a quiet home in which to compose, and it was found for him in Paris by Count Metternich, who offered him rooms at the Embassy. He reached Paris at the end of the year, but owing to an unforeseen disaster in the Metternich family the rooms appointed for him were no longer available. He was in the utmost distress, for he had made the long journey to Paris solely with the purpose of composing his score, and was now left stranded and penniless. The Olliviers were not in a position to offer him hospitality ;

Graf Pourtalès had died; and he had to take up his abode in a small inn on the Quaie Voltaire, seeing little company except Nuitter and a few others of his more intimate friends. Under these wretched conditions the libretto of *Die Meistersinger* was written. After completing it he left Paris and went to Karlsruhe and Mainz, where in Schott's house he read his new work to a circle of friends. He decided to stay in the neighbourhood of the publisher, and found a lodging in Biebrich, a small town within a walk of Mainz on the opposite side of the Rhine, where he rented three small rooms with an outlook over the river. Furniture and grand piano had all to be sent back from Paris, for he always travelled with his whole household. At the end of February he was surprised by a sudden visit from Minna, who had travelled all the way from Dresden. She had been active in his behalf in the Saxon capital, and had induced the Government to remove the restriction upon his amnesty, and to allow him the entry into Saxony. Her plan was that they should start a new home together in Dresden. Ten days later she returned to her home, where her health became steadily worse. She was attended by Pusinelli, who wrote a grave report on her condition, and did not advise her again taking over the charge of a household. In her weak condition she was continually haunted by the spectre of Mathilde Wesendonk, every mention of whom gave rise to fits of jealousy, aggravated, if possible, by the lectures which Wagner wrote her in reply.

On January 10th Röckel had been released from confinement, and had gone to Weimar. He announced the fact to Wagner in a letter which reached him during Minna's visit. He was now fully occupied with the composition of *Die Meistersinger*. Weissheimer, the young conductor at Mainz, who saw him almost every day, gives an interesting account of his way of composing:

> In order to make his sketch as accurate as possible he always availed himself of the pianoforte. . . . He opened only the keyboard of his grand, leaving the lid closed, so that he could write upon it, striking chords with his left hand, or trying a passage

with both hands until he got it right.[1] Then he wrote it down at once, without rising from his place. Writing in this deliberate way his progress was not very rapid, but what was once written remained; he rarely made any correction, and when he came to the instrumentation his work was easy and rapid.

Two more musicians visited him from the neighbouring Wiesbaden, Joachim Raff and August Wilhelmj, the latter then a youth whose talent as a violinist was already attracting notice.

Wagner's letters to Minna are full of longing for rest and solitude with her in Biebrich, in Dresden or elsewhere. He said, and really believed, that he wanted nothing more from the world but to be left in peace to work without care or disturbance. In Karlsruhe he had laid his whole case before the Grand Duke, who responded most sympathetically, and promised to endeavour to form a fund among his well-wishers to provide him with a sufficient income for his support. In March he again went to Karlsruhe, read *Die Meistersinger* to the ducal pair, and attended a performance of *Tannhäuser* given in his honour. He had heard much from Tichatschek and others of a young tenor named Schnorr von Carolsfeld, who was just rising into fame. He and his wife, *née* Malwina Garrigues, had been strongly recommended for the parts of "Tristan" and "Isolde," but his excessive corpulence was considered a great disability, and he had himself declared that he did not understand the part, and could not sing it. Wagner preferred not to meet him or to hear him sing. On one of his visits to Karlsruhe, however, in 1862, he went out of curiosity to the theatre when Schnorr was singing *Lohengrin*.[2] Never since the days of Schröder-Devrient had any singer made such an impression upon him. After the performance he had himself introduced, and there and then invited him and his wife to

[1] Hans Richter, who lived in the room above him for a year while he was composing the third act, declares that he never once heard him touch the piano. The writer has been assured by those who knew Wagner intimately that he *sang* the different parts of his composition aloud, altering continually until he was satisfied with the melody.

[2] See the account in *Ges. Schr.*, viii.

come to Biebrich and study their parts as "Tristan" and "Isolde" with him; as the von Bülows were expected, the opportunity was favourable. Early in July von Bülow arrived with his wife, and the Schnorrs soon after. The objection which had held him back proved to be due to a misunderstanding, and they both declared themselves willing to undertake the parts when the time for the performance should come.

As the music for *Die Meistersinger* progressed Weissheimer made a piano arrangement for four hands, which on the arrival of the visitors he played with von Bülow. The scores of all his yet unperformed works, especially of *Tristan*, were thoroughly studied and rehearsed, the Schnorrs and Wagner singing to the accompaniment of von Bülow. In the *Ring* Wagner's impersonation of *Mime* must have been extraordinarily funny: "He excelled in this part; he bent and wriggled and developed a screaming falsetto . . . making such a face that one seemed to see the ugly, blear-eyed dwarf bodily before one."[1] In the midst of their orgies they were suddenly surprised by a visit of Röckel with his daughter. The whole party then went on an excursion down the Rhine.

Wagner's transactions with the publisher Schott had become very complicated. Schott had, as we remember, undertaken the publication of *Das Rheingold*, and had paid him 10,000 francs for the copyright of the score and the piano arrangement by Klindworth. Further, he had the right of refusal for the other numbers of the *Ring* when ready. For the publishing rights of *Die Meistersinger* he had paid in advance another 10,000 francs, conditionally upon an act being delivered to him ready for the press every three months, so that the whole should be issued by October 1st, 1862. He had also advanced to him considerable sums "on account," that is to say, they were to be repaid when the success of *Die Meistersinger* had established his financial position. Franz Schott, head of the firm since 1840, was a man of marked business capacity; it was under his management that the

[1] Weissheimer, *Erlebnisse*, p. 119.

firm had risen to a leading position in Germany. His sympathies were wide, and were not confined to business. His liberality to Wagner at the time of his sorest distress shows how fully he appreciated his value, and herein he was strongly encouraged by his wife, Frau Betty Schott, *née* von Braunrosch, herself a musician of some mark. Wagner's arrangements with Schott had been made on the assumption that he would be able to work without disturbance at the Embassy in Paris, as he had every reason to believe would be the case. But when this plan came to nothing the restlessness of his subsequent life and his many anxieties made composition very difficult. For a time, however, Schott's support had enabled him to live and to make some progress with his work. Besides his own needs his wife in Dresden was dependent upon what he could send her, and he insisted upon maintaining her in equal comfort with himself. Under these conditions his agreement with Schott came automatically to an end. Wagner failed to deliver his MS. at the terms stipulated, and Schott was unable to continue his advances indefinitely; he was himself in temporary difficulties owing to the war in America, where he had considerable interests. In all his transactions with Wagner Schott was mainly guided by the advice of Heinrich Esser, who has been described in these terms: "True as gold; upright as a man; eminent as a musician and conductor; always sincerely devoted to Wagner as a friend."[1] The catastrophe was again overwhelming. Schott had a serious illness, and it was feared that he would fall into a decline. Wagner wrote distracted appeals for help to "every friend that he possessed in Germany," though he felt that the sources must be well-nigh exhausted. In April

[1] I have thought it necessary to quote this testimony of Herr Schonaich, Standhartner's stepson, one of the warmest of Wagner's friends, because Schott, and by implication Esser, have been shamelessly traduced by Wagner's apologists. Mathilde Maier, for example, is reported to have said that Schott broke his engagement because Wagner was prevented from writing by the bite of a dog. The truth is that Schott acted with the utmost generosity towards Wagner, who had broken his engagement many times over. Schott had not undertaken to support Wagner indefinitely, and there is some truth in Esser's description of Wagner's pocket as a bottomless hole.

he received 1,200 thalers (£180) from the widowed Gräfin Pourtalès; Wesendonk, Pusinelli, Weissheimer, Pauline Tichatschek, the wife of the singer, von Kaskel, a banker in Dresden, are all known to have contributed, as did also probably Dr. Standhartner.

All now depended upon his being able to complete *Die Meistersinger*. Some progress had been made in the earlier part of the summer, and at the end of June the first act was approaching completion. Then came his visitors; when they were gone he was able to settle down to work again, but was disabled from working through August by the bite of a dog. In September he was invited to conduct *Lohengrin* in Frankfort. It is a curious illustration of his mental attitude that he refused a considerable honorarium that was offered to him, declaring that "the conducting of his own work was a matter of honour." Genius has no logic!

In the following month Weissheimer arranged a grand orchestral concert in Leipzig and invited Wagner to contribute some numbers, including the prelude to *Die Meistersinger*, while Liszt's A Major Concerto was to be played by von Bülow. The Schnorrs would also have taken part in it, but their leave was refused in Dresden, where they were engaged. It was also hoped that Wagner's *Fünf Gedichte*, which were just being published by Schott, would be included, but they arrived too late. The proceeds of the concert were to go to Wagner as a loan; it seemed likely that such a programme would produce a crowded hall and result in a large profit, especially as von Bülow was giving his services for nothing. The concert took place on November 1st. Wagner now for the first time after an absence of nearly fourteen years re-entered the land of his birth, staying with his brother-in-law, Hermann Brockhaus. The hall was nearly empty; there was no greeting at his entry, and instead of a profit there was a deficit, which had to be paid by Weissheimer's father.

While in Leipzig he received a timely and unexpected donation of 500 thalers, obtained for him by a friend from the Grand Duke of Weimar. He was thus enabled to go to

Dresden, where he found Minna established and ready to receive him. He took the opportunity to pay a complimentary visit to the Minister, von Beust. It was on this occasion that von Beust brought the charges mentioned in a former chapter against Wagner of having taken an active share in the revolution, charges which are still widely believed, although they have been shown to be entirely without foundation. There seems no reason to doubt the truth of the common belief that von Beust had, ever since his accession to office in 1849, been Wagner's implacable enemy, and that it was through his influence that his amnesty had been so long deferred. A search of the records has proved that no such documents as those referred to by him ever existed, and that no death sentence was, or could be by Saxon law, passed upon Wagner in his absence.[1] The results of Dr. Dinger's inquiry have been confirmed by an official declaration of the Dresden *Amtsgericht*. Von Beust, had in fact, confounded Richard Wagner with another man with the same surname, one Woldemar Wagner, a baker's assistant. That some adverse influence was at work against Wagner in Saxony is unmistakable; in no other way can we account for many inexplicable phenomena—the empty hall at Leipzig, the difficulties encountered by Schnorr whenever he wanted to sing for Wagner, and much more. Thus we see that Wagner's prolonged misfortunes were in great part due to the culpable carelessness of a politician.

At about this time a scheme was set on foot by Wagner's admirers in Wiesbaden, headed by Raff and Hagen, the *Kapellmeister* in that town, for issuing a public appeal to the people of Germany to form a fund to relieve him of all pecuniary anxieties by providing him with a regular income for the rest of his life. The details of the plan are not known, as it never came to anything. Wagner on hearing of it was furious, and flatly refused to have anything to do with it.

Ander in Vienna had, it was thought, now recovered his voice, and Wagner was officially invited to return to Vienna

[1] See above p. 218, and also Ashton Ellis, *Der Aufstand in Dresden*; also Chamberlain, *EchteBriefe*, pp. 42–46, 122 *sqq*.

and resume the rehearsals for *Tristan*. On his arrival there on November 15th he found them in full swing under Heinrich Esser. From this time dates the bitter hostility between Wagner and the critic of the *Neue Freie Presse*, Dr. Hanslick, then all-powerful in the Vienna press. Hanslick had started by being one of Wagner's devoted admirers, and had in 1846 written a series of articles in a Vienna paper highly appreciative of *Tannhäuser*. The accounts are so obviously distorted by the fury of partisanship that it is impossible to say how the quarrel begun. We must not allow ourselves to be misled by Wagnerian rhetoric; we know enough of Wagner's attitude towards hostile journalists, and may easily believe that the feud was fanned by the partisans of both parties. The story told in the *Autobiography* that Hanslick at a private reading of *Die Meistersinger* recognised the part of "Beckmesser" as a picture of himself is too absurd to need refutation. There was a fable current at the time that Wagner had intended to caricature the famous critic. Whatever its origin, Wagner seems to have accepted the story, for in the Vienna sketches of 1861 we find the name "Hanslich" for "Beckmesser," a piece of bad taste which before it was published he corrected, but not before it had become known and proclaimed by his parasites. This fact is suppressed in the *Autobiography*.

We owe our knowledge of this period of Wagner's life chiefly to Weissheimer, who was continually in his company and followed him to Vienna. Scarcely had the *Tristan* rehearsals begun when Ander again fell ill. Another tenor was sought to replace him. Negotiations were opened and continued until the end of the year. Wagner's letters to Schnorr,[1] to whom he naturally turned in his difficulty, are worth reading, as showing his tactfulness and gentleness when dealing with artists. In the end Schnorr could not come; it was neither his fault nor Wagner's, but mainly that of the Vienna singers, who were so uncertain as to make all his plans futile. *Kapellmeister* Esser exerted himself manfully to keep the work alive,

[1] *Briefe an Freunde und Zeitgenossen*, pp. 324 *sqq.*

but he was alone among the theatrical company. Ander kept breaking down; all the singers lost heart and declared the work impossible. The press jeered and hallooed in triumph. The performance seemed farther off than ever, but for consolation he could hear his music diligently played upon the barrel-organs of the Austrian capital. Mainly in order that people might have an opportunity of hearing the sound of his music and not be dependent upon the accounts of it in the press, he began a series of concerts. Wagner never at any time seems to have been averse to giving selections from his works at concerts; he only required that the audience should, by means of leaflets or otherwise, be made acquainted with the dramatic situation with which each piece was connected. What he did dislike, although in the end he was driven to permit it by sheer necessity, was a performance of single portions of the *Ring* without the rest. He positively refused to allow *Rheingold* to be given in Prague or *Die Walküre* in Vienna because he knew that they would not be understood apart from the complete work.

The first concerts were given in Vienna in the *Theater an der Wien* on December 28th and January 1st and 8th, 1863. The Countess Kalergis was then in the capital and was indefatigable in his behalf. She used her influence with the Empress and the higher nobility to awaken interest among the upper circles. She was not wealthy enough to contribute much out of her own pocket, but together with Standhartner and a few other leaders of society she created a fund of 1,500 gulden (£150) towards the expenses. The success was complete, each time the house was crowded, the applause was tumultuous, but the expenses were out of all proportion, and profit there was none. According to Weissheimer, the Empress sent him a donation of 1,000 gulden. Lady Bloomfield, the wife of the English Ambassador, contributed liberally towards the fund, and Lord Lytton,[1] Secretary to the Legation, invited him with Cornelius and Countess Kalergis to dinner, and offered

[1] Later Earl Lytton, Viceroy of India from 1876 to 1880.

him a residence in the Embassy, an offer which his other engagements prevented him from accepting. Perhaps he had already had enough of offers from Embassies.

The concerts made a great impression on the public; at the third three numbers had to be repeated, and the composer was called twenty-three times. The Empress was present, and at the close Wagner made a speech from the stage. He had contrived a large resonant screen to improve the sound; it was very effective, but also very costly. The concerts gave a great stimulus to the study of *Tristan*, which was now resumed with the aid of a new tenor named Walter. Weissheimer gives a glowing description of the little knot of young musicians who were then passing their storm and stress years in Vienna, and had helped him in copying the parts of the *Meistersinger* prelude: the fiery, unbridled Tausig, then aged twenty-one, struggling with his own piano arrangement of the *Walkürenritt*, working himself into a serious illness because he could not play it, and nursed "with the tenderness of a mother" by the gentle, lovable Cornelius. Among these Brahms was a discord; they thought him too fond of money, but he too joined in the copying. Von Bülow was living with his wife in Berlin, in continual feud with the Prussian high powers through his unflagging propaganda for Wagner.

Early in February Wagner conducted a concert of his works in Prague. The success was here even greater than in Vienna, and was the more encouraging from the fact that it brought him in a clear profit of 1,000 gulden (£100). It was the first time that he had made anything out of a concert, and the happy result was largely due to the efforts of a band of young musicians headed by Heinrich Porges, who was destined to become one of his most valuable henchmen, and was charged with the training of the flower-maidens from the first production of *Parsifal* in 1882 till long after the *Meister's* death. The atmosphere of the Bohemian capital was so congenial to Wagner that he contemplated repeating his concert in the autumn, and even bringing out *Tristan* there. The Countess Kalergis had been actively spreading his fame in her own country, Russia,

and Wagner was invited by the Philharmonic Society of St. Petersburg to conduct two concerts for a remuneration of 200 roubles (£200). He went there at the end of February. He was fêted both by high society and by artists, and read his works before Imperial circles. After two concerts for which he had been engaged a third was given for his benefit, and he conducted a fourth on behalf of imprisoned debtors. When he left the hope was everywhere expressed that he would return soon and conduct *Tannhäuser;* it was proposed that he should come every year to give concerts. From St. Petersburg he went on to Moscow to conduct further concerts, with the same success. This trip to Russia set him up in funds "for about a year," as von Bülow fondly believed. By his own account he brought home with him, after paying all expenses for travelling and residence, and remitting 1,000 roubles to Minna, a clear sum of 4,000 thalers (£600). On his way from Russia he stayed in Berlin, where von Bülow had been trying without success to arrange for a concert in the Court Opera-house. Von Hülsen flatly refused to allow the house to be used, or to see Wagner if he called, alleging as his reason the events of 1849.[1] Wagner then returned to Vienna, where *Tristan* had at length been finally abandoned. He took rooms in Penzing, one of the suburbs, at a yearly rental of 1,200 gulden (£120), furnished them with extravagant luxuriance, and engaged a married couple to wait upon him, intending before anything else to finish the score of *Die Meistersinger.* He engaged a milliner to do nothing else but make him clothes and caps of satin and velvet. He seems at first scarcely to have believed that *Tristan* had been given up, that the work of seventy-seven rehearsals continued during eighteen months would really be thrown away; but as he came to realise the truth the disappointment told upon his health. He saw no company except that of his immediate friends, Cornelius and Tausig; he was not in the vein for work, and his composition progressed slowly. In July he writes to Weissheimer in the

[1] His letter is printed *verbatim* in von Bülow's letters, iii. 514.

deepest dejection; in two months all his money has been spent, and his future is without hope. His fiftieth birthday was celebrated by the students and choral societies of Vienna with a torchlight procession and the singing of some of his own compositions before his window. The text of the *Ring* was then just being published with an introduction by himself.[1]

The new Court Opera-house (the present building) was slowly being erected, and at the request of a local journalist Wagner wrote a detailed criticism of the present conditions of the Vienna opera, with suggestions for reform.[2]

> After contrasting the zealous and intelligent activity of the theatrical staff with the meagreness and slovenliness of the representations, he finds the main cause of the evil in the demand for daily performances, involving the appearance of the same persons, one day in a German, the next in an Italian or French opera, with scenery hastily put together, and the whole imperfectly rehearsed. He proposes to reduce the frequency of the representations, and to concentrate on the works given; especially he would abolish the costly Italian singers. As before, in his proposals for Dresden, he recalls the words of Joseph II.[3] that "the Theatre" (that is the Court or national Theatre) "should elevate the morals (Sitten) by ennobling the taste of the nation," and proposes that the Court Opera-house, which is subsidized out of the public funds, should be reserved for works by native composers, in which Vienna is so far richer than any other city in Europe, while the exotic Italian opera, which is exclusively a luxury of the rich, and as a *genre* is not understood by Germans, and only massacred at the Court operas, should be left to private enterprise, due provision being made for it and for the ballet, that they may be rightly and adequately represented. The ideals to be sought in all dramatic representation are "Correctness, Certainty, Precision, Animation." He concludes with a word in favour of that peculiar product of Viennese genius, Strauss's waltzes, which in grace, refinement and real musical feeling far excel many of the exotic products so laboriously imported.

Want of money drove him to more concert-giving. At the end of July he conducted two in Buda-Pesth with great

[1] *Ges. Schr.*, vi. 272. [2] *Ib.*, vii. 272.
[3] See above, Chapter XIV.

success, and brought away a profit of 1,000 guldens (£100). They were followed in the late autumn by a series of concerts, two in Prague on November 5th and 8th, where, however, the management was no longer in the capable hands of Porges, and there was no profit. On the 14th and 19th he conducted in Karlsruhe, on the latter date in the presence of the Queen of Prussia. Many of his older friends and some of his new ones had assembled for the concerts, among them the Countess Kalergis, just married to her second husband, Count Sergius Muchanoff, head of the Warsaw police. They were just setting up their home in Baden-Baden, and invited Wagner to visit them in the interval between the concerts. Here he renewed his acquaintance with Pauline Viardot, in whose family the Russian Ivan Turgenieff was living. After wandering restlessly through Zurich and Mainz to Berlin, he came to Löwenberg, a small town in Silesia, and conducted a private concert given by the Prince Hohenzollern-Hechingen. He next went to Breslau, where Leopold Damrosch[1] was struggling with a moribund Philharmonic Society, and met there for the first time a lady named Marie von Buch, whom we shall meet with again as Gräfin Schleinitz (and by a later marriage Gräfin von Wolkenstein-Trostburg).[2] The whole proceeds of these concerts during the summer amounted to less than £350, of which £210 had been contributed by Prince Hohenzollern. Most of the money had already been spent on living and travelling and in remittances to Minna.

At Löwenberg, at the Court of the Prince, he had met a sister of his Mariafeld friend Frau Wille, named von Bissing, a wealthy elderly widow, who, it is stated, proposed to provide him with a sufficient income if he could only make a shift to live until her affairs were settled and her funds became available. Wagner when he returned to Penzing was practically penniless, burdened with the maintenance of an absent wife, tenant of an expensive flat, owner of a quantity of valuable furniture,

[1] Leopold Damrosch (1832–85), one of Liszt's circle in Weimar, afterwards famous in America in connection with the German opera in New York.

[2] Died 1912.

but without the slightest hope of earning an income. His wealthy friends could do no more for him. The vague prospects which had been held out to him in St. Petersburg and elsewhere were fading away; all Russia was paralysed, so far as artistic undertakings were concerned, by the Polish rebellion. Frau von Bissing failed him in the end, apparently through no fault of her own, her property being locked up in trust. He was driven to raise money at ruinous interest from usurers. Tausig arranged for him a concert at the *Redoutensaal*, where, along with selections from his own compositions, he delighted the Vienna public and orchestra by his rendering of the *Freischütz* Overture. In the spring his affairs were desperate, and he was threatened with imprisonment under Austrian law. He wrote to the Wesendonks through Frau Wille, asking their hospitality during the summer, that he might continue his composition under their roof, or in his former *Asyl;* it was refused. Being in immediate danger of arrest, he sought the counsel of Standhartner and of Eduard Liszt, a Viennese solicitor, uncle of the pianist. By their advice on the afternoon of March 23rd, 1864, he secretly left Penzing and travelled via Munich to Mariafeld, having announced himself a few days previously. His property in Penzing was then sold in the interest of his creditors. The furniture, in order to save it for Wagner, was bought in by Standhartner and Eduard Liszt. Tausig, who had backed one of his bills, was seriously compromised, and obliged to avoid Vienna for a time.

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